Muslim Headteachers' Religion in their Professional Role – A Comparative Study in State Schools in England and Pakistan

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DECLARATION

The work in this thesis was developed and conducted by the author between January 2013 and November 2016. I declare that, apart from work whose authors are explicitly acknowledged, this thesis and the materials contained in this thesis represent original work undertaken solely by the author. I confirm that this thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Partial findings of this research have been presented in several conferences, including:

1. STORIES, Graduate Conference (March 2014), University of Oxford, UK.
2. *Investigating the religious and spiritual views of Muslim headteachers: A comparative study of (Pakistani) Muslim headteachers of state schools in England and Pakistan* at 19th Joint Postgraduate Conference on Religion and Theology (March 2014), University of Bristol, UK.
3. *The "Personal" and the "Professional" – How leadership approaches of Muslim headteachers are influenced by their religion* at British Educational Research Association (BERA) Annual Conference (September 2014), London Institute of Education, UK.
4. *Religion, Spirituality and Educational Leadership* at Fifth International Conference on Religion and Spirituality in Society (April 2015), University of California at Berkley, Berkley, USA.
5. *Investigating leadership actions of Muslim headteachers: A comparative study of (Pakistani) Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan* at Kaleidoscope,

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ABSTRACT

This cross-national research is a comparative study of Muslim headteachers working in state schools in England and Pakistan. The primary focus of this research is to explore the role of religion in Muslim headteachers' professional practice; how it influences their leadership actions, the principles underlying these actions and the different sources from which the headteachers seek guidance while leading their schools. Bearing in mind the importance of context, this research considers various factors operating at the micro (personal), meso (institutional) and macro (national) levels and which influence the way Muslim headteachers in both countries perceive religion in their leadership role. Within the multi-level contextual framework, this thesis focuses on those factors which are particularly related to the Muslim headteachers' religion and to the place of religion in the public spheres of England and Pakistan.

The main participants of this research were Muslim headteachers selected from ten state-maintained schools (primary and secondary); five each in England and Pakistan. A qualitative approach was adopted using semi-structured interviews with the Muslim headteachers and focus group interviews with pupils and teachers in their schools. The interviews from Muslim headteachers provided insight into the influence of religion on their leadership principles and actions. The focus groups elicited the perceptions of teachers and pupils of their experiences of the headteachers' religion in a leadership role.

Key findings of the research have revealed that while the need to act professionally in a state school is somewhat similar between Muslim headteachers in both countries, the religion of the headteachers plays out very differently in the two countries. In England, the Muslim headteachers expressed their religion in a covert way although they acknowledged that religion

was at the base of most of their leadership principles. The language/discourse of leadership principles used by these headteachers was mostly secular and reflected their consciousness of the need to conform to professional expectations as well as to the multi-religious and multi-cultural environment in the selected schools. In Pakistan, the Muslim headteachers viewed religion as the primary source of guidance for their personal as well as professional actions. Although the language/discourse of the leadership principles used by these headteachers was quite similar to their counterparts in England, they emphasised the religious foundation of their principles and guidance.

By demonstrating the impact of (a) the individual contexts of the schools and (b) the place of religion in the national context on the different ways in which the religion of Muslim headteachers is played out in their leadership, this research has made an original contribution to knowledge in England and Pakistan. Considering the historical weakening of the public expression of religion in England, this study on Islam in education and educational leadership has the potential of offering insights into how a minority religion in a Christian-majority country can be considered influential in the face of growing apprehensions about religion in general and Islam in particular. In Pakistan, while acknowledging the dominance of Islam in the public sphere, the findings of this research can contribute to wider debates about the role of Islam in education and its possible implications on issues pertaining to religious minority students.

GLOSSARY

Acronyms

England

BME	Black and Minority Ethnic group
DfE	Department for Education
FSM	Free School Meals
LA	Local Authority
LGBT	Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual and Transgender
MHIE	Muslim Headteachers in England
MTA	Muslim Teachers Association
NCTL	National College for Teaching and Leadership
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
RE	Religious Education
SIP	School Improvement Partner
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
THC	Trojan Horse Controversy

Pakistan

AP	Assistant Professor
DEO	District Education Officer
GoP	Government of Punjab
MHIP	Muslim Headteachers in Pakistan
PED	Punjab Education Department
SED	School Education Department

Religious Terminology

PBUH	"Peace be Upon Him" – A phrase typically used by the Muslims when they say or hear the name of the Prophet Mohammad as a sign of respect and dignity. The use of this phrase in this thesis symbolizes my utmost love and devotion to the Holy Prophet
Amaalnama	Book of deeds, based on which, most Muslims believe that Allah will question each of them in the hereafter
Adan	Call to prayers
Ibaadat	Remembrance of Allah, either in mosque or at home

Ramadan Ninth month of the Islamic calendar and the month in which the Holy Qur'an was revealed

Muharram First month of the Islamic calendar. The tenth of Muharram, also called the Day of the *Ashura*, is the day when Hussain (grandson of the Prophet Mohammad, PBUH) was martyred in the Battle of Karbala. The *Shia* Muslims spend this day in mourning

Zuhr The "noon prayers"

Qur'an The central religious text of Islam

Wudu Ablution – a traditional ritual, followed by Muslims, of maintaining physical and spiritual hygiene in preparation for the five ritual prayers

Aayah Verse from the Qur'an

Sunnah Practices, traditions and customs of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) which are considered to be a perfect example for the Muslims

Hadith (plural: *Ahadeeth*) – Collection of authenticated accounts of what the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said, did or approved

Pillars of Islam (1) Declaration of faith (*Shahdah*); (2) Prayer (*Salah*); (3) Charity (*Zakah*); (4) Fasting (*Sawm*) and (5) Pilgrimage (*Hajj*).

Bible	The central religious text of Christianity
Torah	The central religious text of Judaism

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. ORIGINS

The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of religion on the leadership role of Muslim headteachers, in the formation of various leadership principles and in selecting different sources from which headteachers seek guidance while leading their schools. The idea for conducting this research originated from my involvement in education as a qualified teacher. With a keen interest in religion and education, I had conducted a small-scale research in some private schools in Pakistan to explore the phenomenon of increasing number of Islamic schools (synonymous to Muslim faith schools in the West). A key finding of this research was the impact of religious motivation of the selected headteachers on the establishment and running of their schools.

Encouraged by the findings of this research, I decided to apply my research experience and interest in the field of religion and education in a more detailed study of Muslim headteachers in non-faith state schools for my doctoral research project. My identity as a Pakistani Muslim and my experience of working with Muslim headteachers of Pakistani heritage raised a desire to explore how Pakistanis with similar ethnic and religious backgrounds as myself worked in different contexts. The idea of conducting a cross-national comparative research in non-faith, state schools in England and Pakistan was based on the intention of investigating the manifestation of religion in the professional life of headteachers who belonged to a similar ethnic and religious heritage but lived in two different socio-cultural settings. Such comparison, I envisaged, would not only

highlight the peculiarities of the two contexts but also enhance my understanding of the educational context of both countries.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The premise of this research is to contextualise the concept of educational leadership by paying special attention to how selected educational leaders understood and applied (or not) their religion in a professional role in two culturally diverse countries. British society in the early 21st century is considered to be more plural than half a century ago and through migration and settlement of people with diverse religions, it is 'observably religiously and culturally diverse' (Jackson, 2004; p.1). Tracing the development of religion in British society, Davie (1994, 2015) argued that although the physical and cultural presence of churches is still observed in the country, their influence on the beliefs and behaviours of a large majority of the population is declining. She further argues that among other faiths which are expanding, yet still a minority in Britain (Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism, Buddhism and Other Religions), Islam is the catalyst for opening up the debate about religion in public life, especially after the infamous events in New York and Washington DC in September 2001 (Davie, 2016).

Following the events of 9/11 and subsequent events like 7/7 (the London bombings which took place in 2005), religion and religious beliefs, (especially Islam) were regarded as powerful motivators that could 'indoctrinate' the minds of the young in a supposedly "secular" and "plural" European society (Copley, 2005). That the question of religion and belief in British society is being debated and investigated widely is evidenced by a host of commissioned reports published on this subject. Whether these reports are being written at the request of government officials (Louise, 2016), for theological think tanks (Spencer, 2006, 2008), or for academic

institutions (Butler-Sloss, 2015), they acknowledge the significance of faith and religious and belief identities of people in creating social harmony in the public life. Nevertheless, in some instances, for example The Casey Review, the particular emphasis on Islam and Muslims and the increased suspicion of Islam with regards to the latest acts of terrorism has led to a certain level of anxiety about the place of religion in the English society (Hakim, 2017).

Among the various international and national events which led to increased suspicion of and hostility towards Muslims, both in terms of employment and social life (Thompson, 2016), the Trojan Horse Controversy (THC) in England played a pivotal role in marking Muslims as problematic. The Trojan Horse Controversy (THC) was based on an anonymous letter released in March 2014, which claimed that schools in Birmingham were targeted by Muslims working as school governors in an effort to replace school leaders with headteachers who wanted to adopt a more Islamic agenda (Clarke, 2014; Kershaw, 2014; Gardner et al., 2015). Further claims of the letter included an agenda of "taking over" state schools and forcing them to adopt a more Islamic culture. Since the "targeted" schools, popularly declared as the "Trojan Horse schools", were serving areas with large Muslim populations in the city of Birmingham, the controversy, inevitably, brought to surface the rising apprehensions about religion in general, and Islam in particular. The THC triggered a series of events whose detailed study is beyond the scope of this research. However, the controversy surfaced at the same time when I started this research project and some of the selected (male) headteachers refused to participate owing to apprehensions about their religious identity. Following the controversy, a specific form of hatred, like Islamophobia, was triggered which arguably focused on school governors, most of whom were British males of Pakistani origin (Miah, 2017). This substantiated the timeliness and importance of this doctoral study as it aims to investigate the extent to which Muslim headteachers use (or not use) their religion in a leadership role.

While Islam is a minority religion in England, it is the religion of the majority and the state religion in Pakistan. Based on my experience of living in Pakistan and working in educational institutions in that country for a long time, it is my personal observation that as an overtly Muslim country, commitment and passion for Islam appears evident among the vast majority of her Muslim population. In a country initially created to allow Muslims of the subcontinent the freedom to practise their religious beliefs (Haider, 2010; Jalal, 2014; Ispahani, 2015), the degree and mode of attachment of Pakistani Muslims to their religion is evident from the increased emphasis on Islam in their personal as well as professional lives. Islam, as a belief system, is a fundamental part of the everyday lives of most Pakistanis and they do not see themselves separate from it (Khan, 1999). Although the formal affiliation between Islam and Pakistan is in many ways natural, it is the manipulation and distortion of religion for political benefits which brings to forefront the problems associated with imagining the Pakistani nation solely in terms of religion (Durrani and Dunne, 2010; p.217). With the growing concerns about Islamisation of education in Pakistan, many scholars have argued against the bias resulting from the Islamisation, especially against other religions (Khan, 1999; Dean, 2005; Lall, 2008; Ashraf, 2009; Durrani and Dunne, 2010a; Hussain, Salim and Arif, 2011; Afzal, 2013; Hussain and Safiq, 2016). Therefore, it is crucial to understand the experiences of headteachers, who are part of the general Pakistani public for whom religion is pivotal.

The selection of England for comparing the manifestation of religion in the Muslim headteachers' professional role was based on two reasons. Firstly, there is a large population of Asian Muslims living in Great Britain; the largest amongst all Western countries. From the 5% non-Christian religious groups in the country, Muslims represent the largest minority religious group; and in this group, Pakistanis form the largest ethnic group (Census, 2011). Secondly, Pakistan inherited its education system from the British at the time of independence in 1947.

Although the respective education systems in England and Pakistan diverged over the years, the state/government schools in Pakistan are still characterised by 'educational bureaucracy' and 'hierarchical structures' devised by the British to administer the education system in the pre-independence era (Ali and Babur, 2010; p.5). Among the many local and national policy frameworks devised by the British that still prevail in the current Pakistani education system, the morning assembly/daily act of collective worship, which mainly follows a religious ethos, is a common feature between state schools in England and Pakistan even today. In Pakistan, the content of the morning assembly is visibly Islamic as each day begins with recitation from the Holy Qur`an followed by stories from the Qur`an and the life of the prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

In England, however, the religious ethos of collective acts of worship is not very pronounced. Nevertheless, the guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE) for state schools asserts that acts of collective worship in these schools should be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' (DfE, 1994; p.21). Therefore, despite the decline in the percentage of self-identified Christians from 72% in 2001 to 59% in 2011 (Census, 2011), England remains a historically Christian country with the Church of England as the established Church. Apart from the requirement that acts of collective worship should reflect 'broad traditions of Christian belief' (ibid), most public holidays in the country also have a religious background, for example, Christmas and Easter. Thus, by extending the scope of this doctoral study to include British [Pakistani] headteachers, my intention was to highlight the importance of context and its impact on the articulation of religion in a leadership role in a Muslim minority country (England) versus a Muslim majority country (Pakistan).

The review of literature highlighted the importance of 'multiple cultural contexts' (Dimmock and Walker, 1998a) and 'contextual and cultural relevance' of leadership studies (Ribbins and Gronn, 2000). By situating the headteachers' narratives in the individual contexts of England and Pakistan, I argue, for the purpose of this thesis, that amongst the different variables that influence culture, religion is an important variable that combines with other variables to form the values and ideals underpinning a society's culture, its school communities and their leadership. Furthermore, I argue that along with many other factors, religion is a powerful determinant of the values and beliefs of individuals that differentiates societies and organisational practices of its individuals in varying degrees. The 'interpretive/constructivist' approach to context emphasised the 'lived experiences of situationally embedded real-world actors' (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996; p.455) and helped in investigating and understanding the phenomenon under study, i.e. to what extent do [Pakistani] Muslim headteachers working in state schools (in England and Pakistan) perceive that religion has any influence on their leadership.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question for this study was 'how do Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan perceive the role of religion in their professional practice?' To answer this question, four subsidiary questions were used, which were:

1. What are the principles that underlie the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers?
2. What are the different types of guidance followed by these Muslim headteachers?
3. What contextual factors influence the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan?
4. How do teachers and pupils perceive the role of religion in the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers in their respective schools?

All the above questions were explored in relation to how Muslim headteachers perceived the place of religion in their professional practice. The headteachers, selected for this study, identified themselves as Muslims. Their subscription to the Islamic faith was a sufficient criterion for them to be included in the sample (further details about the headteachers' selection and inclusion will be given in the Methodology chapter). Therefore, questions regarding the headteachers' religion focused on investigating how they perceived religion in a professional role only. These perceptions were then compared with the teachers' and pupils' views about the role of religion in their headteachers' leadership.

1.4. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The *Introduction* chapter begins by elucidating the motivation for conducting this research. Following this, the rationale for conducting a cross-cultural comparative study is explained keeping in mind the differences between England and Pakistan in terms of how religion is perceived. Finally, the research questions provide the basis for exploring the phenomenon under study, that is, exploring the manifestation religion in Muslim headteachers' professional role.

Chapter 2 proceeds to look at theoretical and empirical evidence on the need to study school leadership in a particular context. The complex nature of the research entails a detailed review of cross-cultural comparative studies in school leadership as well as the place of religion in a leadership role in different international contexts, and in particular, England and Pakistan. Within the context of the two countries, the review of literature provides a theoretical framework for analysis which will be later used for analysing findings of the research.

Chapter 3 explains the process by which this research has been conducted. Emphasising the phenomenon of interest, i.e. 'the place of religion in a professional role', the choice of an appropriate research methodology for this project was a pragmatic decision based on the research questions and the objectives of the research. Elements have been borrowed from Multiple Case Study approach and Hermeneutic Phenomenology to study both the Muslim headteachers *and* their religion. The selection of headteachers, teachers and pupils in both countries has been explained in detail and special attention has been given to explaining my own position in the research. The last section of this chapter outlines the analytical framework used for interpreting and explaining the responses of the headteachers.

Chapters 4 and *5* present the findings of this research in the form of narrative case study reports on the Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan respectively. Each chapter is divided into two parts. Part I, in each chapter, comprises the narratives of the Muslim headteachers and the experiences of their respective teachers and students. It begins by giving a background of state schools in the respective countries and then explains the structure of the narrative case studies. The structure of all ten case studies is based on two key themes, (a) Person in profession and (b) Religion in profession. Part II, in each chapter, synthesises the findings of each set of Muslim headteachers while engaging in an interpretive analysis.

Chapter 6 presents a synthesis of the findings and literature while engaging in a critical discussion to show how the headteachers' religion interacted with other contextual factors to influence their perceptions and experiences of their religion in a professional role. Building on the synthesis of analysis presented in Part II of Chapters 4 and 5, this chapter explains the interplay between the headteachers' religion, their principles, actions and guidance.

Finally, *Chapter 7* suggests the implications of this research for England and Pakistan separately. By arguing that the religion of Muslim headteachers can be instrumental in their leadership roles depending on (a) the place of religion in the national context, (b) the individual contexts of their schools and (c) their personal religious inclination, this chapter also proposes areas for further research in both countries.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF RELIGION IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will review the theoretical and empirical literature on religion and school leadership in international contexts to develop the knowledge base that underpins the research purpose of the present study. Particular emphasis will be placed on religion and its influence on the social practices of individuals and how schools as social organisations may reflect the interplay between religion and leadership practices of headteachers. The chapter comprises three main sections. The first section sets the ground for studying school leadership in different contexts. The second section reviews cross-cultural comparative studies on school leadership with a particular focus on the distinction between culture and religion. The final section provides a conceptual framework for analysis while reviewing religion at the societal/national (macro), institutional (meso) and individual (micro) levels.

2.2. UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS

According to Sergiovanni (2009), 'leader and context defy separation' (p. 2). Keeping the focus of this research in mind, this comparative study of school leadership aims to interpret and describe the similarities and differences in the way headteachers perceived their religion in a professional role. While this review does not aim to study in detail the vast literature about school/educational leadership theories and models, one particular theory/model of leadership, the Contingency Theory (Bush and Glover, 2003) is of particular relevance, elements of which I

found useful to describe and interpret the headteachers' actions in an international context. Using Leithwood et al's (1999) study as a basis in which the authors proposed six leadership models derived from an extensive study of 121 leadership articles, Bush and Glover argued that these models were normative distinctions in leadership theories, not backed by sufficient empirical evidence, especially in the British context (Bush and Glover, 2003; p.34). Furthermore, according to the authors, the models presented unrealistic distinctions of leadership styles as school leaders were likely to use most or a combination of these approaches in real life. This, therefore, called for a need to conduct further research to find out which actions enabled the headteachers to produce the intended outcomes using their vision, i.e. whether transformational and transactional leadership approaches (the two models discussed most often in leadership literature worldwide) lead to school success or whether headteachers need to exercise their leadership in relation to any particular context or plan.

In their report for the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL), Bush and Glover (2003) stated that schools in the 21st century were going through rapid and multiple changes, owing to which headteachers needed to adapt their leadership styles to address a given situation or a new event (Bush and Glover, 2003; p.34). While acknowledging the wide variations in school contexts, they proposed a 'contingent leadership' model for school leaders to deal with diverse and unique organisational circumstances. They suggested that instead of adopting a *one size fits all* stance, school leaders should be able to 'adapt their approaches to the particular requirements of the school, and of the situation or event requiring attention' (Bush and Glover, 2003; p.22). Similarly, Day and colleagues emphasised that contingency *in* school leadership was not about the practices observed, rather it was *the way* in which these practices are enacted (Day et al., 2011; p.31). This approach, according to Bush and Glover, could be helpful in critical times when headteachers are expected to assess a situation and then respond and react

accordingly (2014; p.564). Hence, this model can lend itself to finding empirical evidence on how contextual factors could influence the leadership actions of headteachers and to what extent headteachers need to adapt their leadership approaches to address a given situation rather than relying on a particular leadership approach.

According to Yukl (2013), the reason for developing contingency theories was to explain why leadership behaviours and traits of effective school leaders vary in different situations. The *multiple-linkage model*, proposed by Yukl, derived ideas from some early contingency theories and explained how the interaction between managerial behaviour and situational variables influenced the performance of individuals in an organisation (Yukl, 2013; p.173). The 'situational variables' were also emphasised by Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999) who claimed that it was important for school leaders to respond to 'the unique organisational circumstances or problems' in order to be effective (p.15). The act of responding to these unique circumstances in varied international contexts, therefore, suggests that the contingency leadership model is pragmatic in nature (Bush and Glover, 2014). While emphasising the relevance of context for effective headteachers, this particular model could be used to explain why headteachers should deal with situations or events using their leadership experiences and professional development while remaining alert to the impact of a given event.

The idea of studying school leadership in a particular context has been supported by numerous other authors. For example, Gronn and Ribbins (1996) argued that in order to understand the agency of school leaders (empirically), it was important to reconceptualise context as 'the sum of situational, cultural and historical circumstances' (p.454). Drawing on qualitative evidence about headteachers' experiences, Gunter also suggested that when talking about their work, the headteachers gave accounts which were both personal and contextualised (2001; p.95). She

argued that headteachers' lives were complex and in order to understand their leadership experiences, 'headship' should be considered as a 'lived and living thing that needs to be constructed and reconstructed through the experience of narratives' (Gunter, 2005; p.172). Hallinger and Heck (1998), on the other hand, advocated contextualised school leadership in order to understand the complex process which characterised headteachers' leadership behaviours and their interactions with the school and its environment. Drawing on the contingent leadership model, therefore, there is a need for headteachers to take a reflexive approach to school leadership to recognise the diverse nature of school contexts.

Studying school leadership in a contextualised setting also brings to attention the use of two relatively neglected methodological approaches to researching leadership such as ethnography and biography (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996). According to Gronn and Ribbins, a biographic approach allowed researchers to understand how school leaders developed their value frameworks, which might possibly be derived from their own religion and which affected their respective leadership approaches throughout their careers. Such an approach facilitated a better understanding of 'leadership as a socially constructed phenomenon' (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996; p.456). An ethnographic approach to study school leadership led to a 'naturalistic investigation' where school leaders' perspectives could be compared against those of staff, pupils and other members of the school community and then related to the wider context comprising political and policy environments (1996; p.458). The ethnographic approach resonated with Gunter's (2005) idea of 'powerful conceptualisation' in which she argued that the pluralistic nature of the field of educational leadership called for a range of methods to be used to enable a naturalistic investigation. While Gunter suggested using observations, interviews, experiments and questionnaires, Gronn and Ribbins stressed the appropriateness of 'observational, documentary and interview data' to conceptualise school leadership (1996; p.458).

Defining context as categorical, interpretive and relational, Gronn and Ribbins emphasised that the interpretive/constructivist approach to context focused on the 'lived experiences of situationally embedded real-world actors' (1996; p.455). These 'situationally embedded' actors included a range of people or 'significant others' whose opinions mattered, such as students, staff, parents and governors. Therefore, 'situated portrayals' could provide subjective interpretations of how leadership is understood by headteachers. These interpretations, when located in a cultural context, are shaped by the interaction of micro, meso and macro level factors (Ribbins and Gronn, 2000; p.39). Moreover, the 'multi-actor perspectives' could provide a basis for comparing and contrasting the headteachers' accounts against those of the teachers and pupils to locate the headteachers' accounts within the context of these 'significant others'.

In his conceptual and empirical review of the development of instructional and transformational leadership models, Hallinger concluded that the effectiveness of either model was linked to various factors in the schools' external environment which made principal leadership meaningless unless studied in reference to the school context (2003; p.346). In his review, he identified contextual variables like student background, community type, organisational structure, school culture, school size, etc. as important variables of interest for the principal, which needed to be taken into consideration. While Bush and Glover's (2003) definition regarded school leadership as 'a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes', Hallinger suggested that the process of influencing should be a mutual one (Hallinger, 2003; p.346). Thus, inspite of increased globalisation, it cannot be assumed that definitions of school leadership developed in one particular context will apply universally to all countries. Several factors in the internal and external context could explain the possible differences in the leadership approaches of headteachers.

Having reviewed the literature on school leadership, I see the relevance of Contingency Theory and its emphasis on contextual variables influencing the leadership role of headteachers. Taking clues from the contingency theory, my aim is to review how religion as a possible contextual variable may influence school leaders in their everyday professional lives. However, considering the complexity of the interplay between religion and culture, it is important to tease out the meaning of culture, especially, as developed and understood in cross-cultural comparative studies. Therefore, in the next section, I will review culture to the extent of understanding its nuances in relation to religion. While the focus is on exploring the influence of religion on school leadership in international contexts, I will discuss culture and its various meanings to acknowledge the complexity which intensifies when it comes to understanding the role of religion in Muslim headteachers' leadership.

2.3. A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The field of comparative educational administration gained researchers' attention in the 1990s when rapid globalisation of educational policies and practices demanded a study of school leadership in international and cultural contexts (Cheong, 2000; Dimmock and Walker, 2000; Hallinger and Leithwood, 1996; Dimmock and Walker, 1998a; Hallinger and Leithwood, 1998). This was considered particularly important since importing fundamental ideas from one country to another was problematic if the contexts and cultures in which they are developed were not understood (Walker and Dimmock, 2002). Rather than building on Western theories and practices of school leadership based on empirical evidence from these countries only, researchers started looking for approaches to school leadership in the particular context of countries and cultures (Ribbins and Gronn, 2000). The constant reconfiguration of school systems across different continents also emphasised the need to study the role of headteachers within the

context in which they worked (Dimmock and Walker, 1998a). According to Hallinger and Heck (1998), the leadership behaviour of headteachers was influenced by the context of the school and its environment (Hallinger and Heck, 1998). Therefore, the idea of contextualising leadership practices became increasingly important for understanding why headteachers practised their roles differently between countries.

Recognising the need to understand school leadership in a particular context, researchers interested in comparative and cross-cultural studies broadly divided such comparisons between 'developed' and 'developing' countries or 'Western' and 'Eastern/East-Asian' countries (Hallinger and Leithwood, 1996; Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Dimmock and Walker, 1998a; b, 2000; Walker and Dimmock, 2002; Hallinger, 2003). However, this distinction between "developed" and "developing" is problematic in itself since the geographical location or economic condition usually positions countries ahead of or behind one another and which is not the premise of this study. Instead, by situating this research in the field of international and comparative education, my aim is to understand the nuances of the term 'culture' in relation to religion and to see how it may influence school leadership differently in different national contexts. This understanding is based on the argument that unique cultural features such as language, beliefs, values, religion and social organisation contribute to differences in leadership approaches in different countries (Dorfman et al., 1997). While acknowledging the problematic debate on how the study of culture fits with the study of religion (Hulsether, 2005), I will review literature on comparative school leadership which highlights 'religion' and culture' as contingent variables that have a potential to influence the leadership practices of headteachers in different national contexts.

According to Dimmock and Walker, the concept of culture provided explanation for human and organisational behaviour in terms of the interactions between 'individuals (their personalities), the organisations and institutions in which they live and work, and the larger environments that circumscribe both' (1998a; p.562). Emphasising their significance, Dimmock and Walker claimed that variables in societal culture offered 'partial explanations of school leaders' behaviours and actions' (2005; p.21). Drawing from Hofstede's cross-cultural dimensions for comparing school leadership in culturally diverse countries, Dimmock and Walker proposed a model for comparative educational leadership and management (2000). In their model, the authors identified six cultural dimensions at the societal level namely (1) Power concentrated/power dispersed, (2) Group-oriented/self-oriented, (3) Aggression/consideration, (4) Fatalistic/proactive, (5) Generative/replicative and (6) Limited relationship/holistic relationship (Dimmock and Walker, 2000; p.154). While they argued that culture can have a significant influence on school leadership in and within different societies, Dimmock and Walker claimed that their model did not consider all variables that influenced culture, school communities and their leadership (Dimmock and Walker, 2005; p.25). For example, religion, as a variable, was not included even though the authors acknowledged that it had a significant influence on societal culture and subcultures. Shah (2010) argued that the dominant cultural and belief systems that characterise a society can lead to significant variations in how school leadership is perceived and constructed. Considering the contested boundaries between culture and religion (and culture and Islam in particular), I argue for the purpose of this thesis, that there is a need to understand religion as an aspect of culture; a field which to my knowledge is not widely researched. It is to this that I now turn my attention.

2.3.1. Understanding culture in school leadership

The influence of culture in understanding variations in school leadership has been reiterated by a number of researchers (Hallinger and Leithwood, 1998, 1996; Dimmock and Walker, 1998a; Walker and Dimmock, 2002; Cheong, 2000; Kai-Ming, 1995; Heck, 1996). Informed by the above discussion, there is a need to define the term culture for this research, which by no means is an easy task. In view of the vastness of this term and its contested nature, I intend to concentrate on those definitions of culture that (a) loosely relate to/ or overlap with religion and (b) can explain the differences in school leadership in different national contexts. For example, Hofstede defined culture as,

> the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. (Hofstede, 1991; p.5)

According to Hofstede, the most common manifestations of cultural differences were 'symbols, heroes, rituals and values' (2010; p.9). However, he cautioned that these were only dimensions of cultural differences, which could be used as tools for analysis but not reified as solutions for clarifying a situation. Spencer-Oatey claimed culture to be,

> a fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioural norms, and basic assumptions and values that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the "meaning" of other people's behaviour.
>
> (Spencer-Oatey, 2000; p.4)

Contrary to Hofstede (1991) and Spencer-Oatey (2000), Geertz (1973) took an interpretive approach in defining culture. According to Geertz, culture

> denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life
>
> (Geertz, 1973; p.89)

On the one hand, Geertz's definition of culture contributes to the previously mentioned dimensions of culture by proposing terms such as 'symbols', 'meanings' and 'conceptions'. On the other hand, it lends itself to the interpretation of human behaviour in the form of 'communication' and 'development of knowledge and attitude towards life', which according to Geertz, should be somewhat coherent between cultural systems (Geertz, 1973b). These definitions position culture as a product as well as a process. Hence it seems plausible to suggest that culture is a way of life for every society, which as Dawson (2013) contends, 'exerts so powerful an influence on its individual members that hereditary differences of character and predisposition are worked into the pattern of culture as the multi-coloured threads are woven into the design of a fabric' (p.36).

Dimmock and Walker (2000) proposed a definition which explored the impact of different levels of culture, namely, national, institutional and group culture on school leadership:

> Culture is defined as the enduring set of beliefs, values and ideologies underpinning structures, processes and practices which distinguishes one group of people from another. The group of people may be at school level (organisational culture) or at a national level (societal level). (Dimmock and Walker, 2000; p.146)

According to Dimmock and Walker (1998), the need to compare education systems between different societies became even more important because people, organisations and countries shared similarities and differences in terms of their cultures and the multidimensionality of the concept of culture (societal vs. organisational dimensions) acted as an analytical tool to investigate deeper into the organisations. Furthermore, a narrow focus of existing studies, either

on single classroom or single school level, led to over or under-generalisation of a situation. Therefore, a multicultural perspective that takes into account the differences in the national contexts in which leadership practices are applied could explain the phenomenon of school leadership in a more grounded context.

Keeping in mind the focus of this research, I am in agreement with Dimmock and Walker's (2000) definition of culture since they emphasised the role of culture and cultural dimensions as the context in which school leadership can vary in different national contexts. Although they affirmed the significance of culture and its impact on the values, beliefs and practices of individuals living in that culture, the relation between culture and religion and the particular impact of religion on cultural and belief systems was not explored. While all the above definitions of culture have similarities and differences, my focus is explicitly on the dimensions of values, beliefs, ideologies and behaviours/practices. These dimensions, as I will argue later overlap with aspects of religion. However, while most comparative cross-cultural studies acknowledge the significance of culture and its impact on the values, beliefs and practices of individuals living in that culture, religion as an independent variable is not given much attention. Considering that the boundaries between religion and culture are permeable, I contend that more empirical evidence is required to understand the problematic relationship between culture and religion and the particular impact of religion on cultural and belief systems.

While acknowledging the need for more empirical evidence in comparative studies on educational leadership, some researchers have drawn attention to the methodological and conceptual challenges in cross-cultural studies (Crossley and Broadfoot, 1992; Heck, 1996; Weindling and Dimmock, 2006; Dimmock and Walker, 1998b; Heck, 2002; Cheong, 2000). For example, cross-cultural research is usually characterised by its national boundaries (Dimmock

and Walker, 1998b). However, Heck (2002) argued that this can be problematic especially since individual school cultures within countries may not be synonymous with the national culture (Heck, 2002; p.89). Cheong (2000) described this as 'cultural heterogeneity' where 'contextual cultures' comprising society, community, school and classroom may be different for its members (Cheong, 2000; p.217). Therefore, in such cases, it can be difficult to transfer or generalise the enactment of headteachers' roles across school settings as this could lead to the decontextualising of leadership norms and behaviours from 'their wider contextual setting' (Heck, 2002; p.89).

Another challenge in cross-cultural comparative studies of educational leadership is of 'conceptual equivalence' (Heck, 1996; p.80). That is, owing to the differences in societal cultures, some concepts may be perceived differently across cultures. Therefore, comparing leadership practices of headteachers based on such concepts may be difficult since they have a different meaning for people in different cultures. But as Heck (2002) claimed, it was the differences and similarities between the headteachers' conceptualisation of an action (or concept) which provided an opportunity for further research in cross-cultural educational leadership. The identification of such differences and similarities, based on contextual differences, needs to be done carefully especially since the role of religion in any society cannot be ignored. Thus, advancing on cross-cultural research in educational leadership, there is a need to acknowledge religion as an independent category of analysis to understand the differences in the perception and practise of educational leaders in diverse national contexts.

2.3.2. Understanding religion in school leadership

The conceptualisation of leadership practices varies significantly across societies as the dominant culture shapes the thoughts and actions of school leaders in terms of their leadership, communication, learning and teaching (Dimmock and Walker, 2005). Shah (2010) claimed that culture as a category of analysis has been recognised in the field of educational leadership, however, the significance of religion was not highlighted. Drawing upon the multiple definitions of culture discussed above (Geertz, 1973a; Hofstede, 1991; Dimmock and Walker, 2000), beliefs, values, ideologies and practices, appear to be the defining characteristics of culture and cultural systems. But, then how is culture different from religion? According to Geertz, religion is:

> (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.
>
> (Geertz, 1973a; p.90)

Geertz (1973) regarded 'symbols' as outward expressions of people's moods and motivations, which gave meaning to their worldviews. By using symbols as a starting point, Geertz attempted to define religion as a shaping force that established 'a clear sense of "what is" as well as "what ought to be"' (Williams, 1996; p.370) with the aim to objectify and interpret human experiences. Thus, if religion is regarded as an aspect of meaning creation, so is culture and aspects of culture which, according to Dimmock and Walker, (2005) provide 'at least partial explanations of school leaders' behaviours and actions' (p.21). My argument then is that while the role of culture in influencing school leadership has been acknowledged by numerous scholars, there is a need to investigate the particular impact of religion, as an element or subset of culture, on the

professional practices of school leaders since the dimensions of religion and culture are quite similar and debates about the intersectionality of the two terms remain unresolved.

By shifting the focus of inquiry from understanding the various aspects of culture and their likely impact on school leadership, to one of defining religion, it may be possible to understand the extent to which religion can influence the social practices of school leaders. However, the task of defining religion, particularly in the field of education and educational leadership, is a difficult one. Davie (2007) argued that while substantive definitions of religion focus specifically on beliefs about the supernatural, functional definitions of religion struggle what to, or what not to include in religion. For the purpose of this thesis, a working definition of religion will be used since the individual agency of school leaders about their religion and religious commitment is important. Thus, religion will be defined in terms of what it does and how it influences the society/culture of which it is a part (Davie, 2007; p.19).

Regarding schools as social organisations, Geertz's (1993) definition of religion will be taken as a starting point in understanding what religion does in society and within institutions. However, considering the comparative nature of this study, I will also consider scholars whose explanation of religion brings to surface a distinction between Western and/or secular societies and traditional and/or religious societies. In particular, I will review the works of Daniele Hervieu-Leger (2000), Jürgen Habermas (2006) and Charles Taylor (2007) who, more than defining what religion is in itself, drew attention to the societal contexts in which the framework of thought about religion was constructed and later evolved.

Daniele Hervieu-Leger, a leading French scholar, set up a distinction between "modern" and "traditional" societies while defining religion. Hervieu-Leger (2000) regarded the concept of

'memory' as central to the understanding of religion. By linking memory with tradition, she described religion as a shared understanding of 'ideological, practical and symbolic system' of beliefs (p.82). While differentiating "Western" societies from the "traditional" ones based on their divergence from and convergence towards religion (respectively), Hervieu-Leger argued that despite the fragmentation of religion in Western societies, religion is still seen and heard in different ways, either explicitly or implicitly. Jürgen Habermas, a German sociologist and philosopher, however, contested that such a manifestation of religion in modern Western societies was problematic as it was difficult for religious citizens in a secular state to find a balance between their religious and secular convictions (Habermas, 2006; p.8). According to Habermas (2006), citizens of "liberal"/secular states who adhered to a faith were expected to bear the burden of translation; that is, they must translate their [religious] motivations in secular terms in order to get accepted publicly. Thus, regardless of the fact that religion played an integral part in the life of a person of faith, a religious person must use a language that allowed him to consider his faith 'reflexively from the outside and relate it to secular views' (Habermas, 2006; p.12).

Further endorsing the distinction between "secular" and "religious" societies, Taylor defined the two societies in terms of people's degree of attachment with religious beliefs and practices. Instead of seeing the modern age and modern societies without religion, Taylor (2007) viewed secularization as 'a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace' (p.3). He proposed a definition of secularity that did not herald a disappearance of religious beliefs, rather he defined the term as a change in the way people living in the "modern Western" countries experienced the world. While these three key Western scholars engaged with the concept of religion in the public sphere and explained how it evolved

over the years, their perspectives highlighted the distinction between "Western/modern" and "traditional/religious" societies based on the sociohistorical manifestation of religion, rather than defining religion per se.

I shall therefore return to my earlier argument that the definition of religion, for this thesis, is not to be regarded as a unitary definable concept, rather how individuals construct its meaning and how they perceive religion as influencing their behaviour. However, to provide a theoretical base for religion, I contend to borrow elements from the multi-faceted definitions of religion, such as an ideological, practical and symbolic system of beliefs (Hervieu-Leger, 2000); a unifying set of beliefs and practices that unite followers into a moral community (Durkheim, 1995); a system of symbols affecting one's disposition in terms of moods and motivations (Geertz, 1973a). Such conceptions, it is argued, are useful since 'religion is not an independent subject matter just sitting there for all to see, but a term that its user chooses to associate with certain kinds of phenomenon' (Paden, 1992 cited in Hulsether, 2005). Based on these elements, therefore, I espouse an understanding of religion for this study, which considers religion as a set of values and beliefs that shape the experience, knowledge and practices of people who belong to a particular religious tradition. Using this understanding as a base, it is expected that the distinct aspects of religion, proposed by various scholars may or may not co-exist as the individual accounts of headteachers are evaluated.

In the above sections, I have presented definitions of culture and religion as they inform this study. While the impact of culture on school leadership has been established through literature on cross-cultural comparative studies, religion as an independent contextual variable that can influence school leadership has not been debated enough. Based on the argument that religion in school leadership is an under-researched area, I will now look at other dimensions of context in

addition to the national context, to study the interplay between religion and social practices of individuals living in different countries to evaluate this problématique further.

2.4. RELIGION, SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND A MULTI-LEVEL CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

To understand why headteachers might perceive their religion in a leadership role differently in different contexts, this study will attempt to explore the various dimensions of context, in particular religion, to see how they can possibly influence the leadership practices of headteachers in two different countries.

In the last two decades, cross-cultural and comparative studies in educational leadership have attracted much attention from researchers. While the focus was on reviewing the role of cultural and cross-cultural forces, other contextual factors influencing school leaders were also researched widely. For example, according to Gronn and Ribbins, investigating socially constructed perspectives of headteachers at 'various interacting levels' could provide a grounded view of the headteachers' interpretation of their leadership actions (1996, p.459). Cheong (2000), on the other hand, emphasised the importance of studying 'national, community and school-site levels' in terms of their effect on educational effectiveness. In their model for comparative and international educational leadership and management, Dimmock and Walker looked at two levels of culture, societal and organisational, in order to understand why 'some leadership practices appear to be workable in some contexts but not others' (2000, p. 147). In a more recent work on cross-cultural leadership and diversity, Yukl drew attention to the fact that due to an increase in the diversity of people in leadership positions, it was imperative to find out whether the performance of an organisation was linked to the leaders' gender, race, ethnic background,

nationality or religion (2013, p.348). Thus, school leadership was found to be influenced by the interplay between multiple factors operating at different levels.

The need to study school leadership in a particular context has been discussed by various researchers. For example, while developing a framework for understanding the role of a headteacher as an instructional manager, Bossert and colleagues (1982) identified a number of contextual factors which, they asserted, could affect the headteachers' management behaviour. These included 'personal characteristics' such as gender, training and experience of the principals; 'district characteristics' such as structure, goals, rules and regulations that governed the school in relation to the formal controls imposed by the broader education system; and 'external social environment' such as district finances, parent pressures, student challenges to school administration and pressures from minority populations (pp. 52-53). Hallinger and Leithwood (1996) built on Bossert et al.'s (1982) work and emphasised on school, as well as societal culture for their likely influence on the headteachers' leadership practices. Later, Dimmock and Walker (1998a; b) while focusing on the school and its practices rather than on individual behaviour, proposed various contextual elements of organisational culture for developing a cross-cultural conceptual framework, such as 'organisational structures', 'curriculum', 'leadership, management and decisional processes' and 'teaching and learning' (1998a p.582). Therefore, keeping in mind the importance of 'multiple cultural contexts' (Dimmock and Walker, 1998a) and 'contextual and cultural relevance' of leadership studies (Ribbins and Gronn, 2000), comparing leadership actions of headteachers in different national contexts, while emphasising various contextual factors, was deemed useful.

Most comparative studies in educational leadership and management, which started in the last decade of the 20th century, developed comparative frameworks for educational administration

using school as the basic unit of analysis (Harber, 1992; Kai-Ming, 1995; Heck, 1996; Walker and Hallinger, 2015; Dimmock and Walker, 1998a; b; Cheong, 2000; Dimmock and Walker, 2000). In particular, Dimmock and Walker's (1998a) cross-cultural conceptual framework for comparative educational leadership and management described organisational behaviour as 'a complex interplay between the personality and motives of individuals, the culture of society and organisation in which in which individuals live and work respectively, and generic characteristics of human nature' (p.569). Thus, while remaining alert to the fact that leadership in schools does not take place in a vacuum, rather it takes place in an organisational context (Porter and McLaughlin, 2006), Ribbins and Gronn argued that there is a need to understand the agency of particular school leaders as the organisational or meso-level of context combines with micro- (personal) and macro- (societal) levels (Ribbins and Gronn, 2000). While the multitude of contextual factors identified in the above paragraphs corresponded to Ribbins and Gronn's (2000) three levels of context, religion as a contextual variable was not mentioned. Therefore, it can be argued that the theoretical engagement on religion and the role of religion in influencing school leadership is limited.

Drawing from the comparative frameworks developed to understand the variations in school leadership in different educational contexts globally, I propose a multi-level conceptual framework for this empirical research to examine religion as a contextual element that can influence leadership practices of headteachers in different countries and educational contexts. Broadly taking religion as a set of values and beliefs that can shape the knowledge, experience and practices of people who associate with a particular religious tradition, I argue that the place of religion at the societal/national (macro) level can influence the way religion is perceived in individual organisations; schools included (meso-level). Moreover, people who are part of the social organisations, and schools in particular, articulate and behave to reflect their respective

organisations and subsequently the societies they belong to (micro). It is important to note that the literature reviewed in these sections will examine theoretical and empirical evidence on the place of religion at the societal, institutional and personal levels, within the diverse national contexts of England and Pakistan.

The macro- (societal) and meso- (institutional) levels will review aspects such as the relationship between religion and national context, the discourses of religion and how religion is expressed in culturally diverse countries like England and Pakistan, in general and in the education sector in particular. Since the focus of this study was religion in leadership, these two levels together will provide a lens to see the interplay between religion and practices in schools as social organisations in the two countries. Finally, the micro (personal) level of context will review the contextual elements at this level such as personal values and religion and religiosity of school leaders (and Muslim school leaders) while debating the interplay between religion and professional practices of headteachers in the respective contexts of England and Pakistan.

2.4.1. Macro- (national) and meso- (institutional) levels

Regarding leadership as a 'socially constructed phenomenon' (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996; p.456), the interpretation of the headteachers' actions is not only influenced by the interrelationship between the headteachers' personal characteristics and the immediate context of their schools, but is also shaped by the wider political and cultural contexts. According to Walker and Dimmock (2002), even though headteachers might not be able to exert influence on the societal culture which was outside the sphere of the school, it impacted the school as a whole (Walker and Dimmock, 2002; p.71). The review of literature in this section will look at how religion, as part of culture is understood, interpreted and expressed in the different national contexts of

England and Pakistan, in general, and within educational institutions in the two countries, in particular.

2.4.1.1. Religion in England and English education system

A country which was historically a Christian country with the Church of England as the established Church, is now experiencing a fast decline with a large majority of people thinking of themselves 'as secular rather than religious' (Davie, 2015; p. 43). At the same time as Christianity declined during the past three decades, the presence of other faith groups, comprising Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews and Buddhists, became significant. Of these faith groups, Muslims form the largest non-Christian minority group in England constituting 4.8% of the total population in 2011 (Census, 2011). While on the one hand, the shift from 'religious' to 'secular' led to the decline in religious knowledge and religious belief in the modern twenty-first century England, on the other hand, scholars identified and acknowledged a simultaneous growth and spread of other religions and most notably, Islam (Kettell, 2009; Davie, 2015).

The expression of religious faith in education is contested in the multicultural, multi-ethnic and religiously plural English society. A large part of this contestation is linked with debates on bringing (or not bringing) in religious beliefs in education, especially in state-funded schools with a religious character, which constitute about one-third of the total state-funded school population in England (Long and Bolton, 2015). Although the focus of the present research was state schools without a religious character, the argument regarding the inclusion of religious beliefs in education was, to some extent, relevant as all local authority maintained schools mainly follow a Christian ethos in their teaching of Religious Education (RE).

In his critique on religion in public sphere, Habermas argued that citizens of liberal states are 'obliged to establish a kind of balance between their religious and their secular convictions' (2006; p.8). Such an act, according to Habermas, raises the question whether a liberal state can deny people of faith their right to draw on their religious beliefs and worldviews, especially when it is their basic right to draw on their religious beliefs. As an answer, Habermas proposed reflexivity on one's own faith position and neutrality towards other faiths in a way that people ascribing to a religion or faith did not have to 'split their identity into a public and a private part the moment they participate in public discourses' (2006; p.10).

In the case of England, handling religious beliefs is a concern which is being widely debated at various government and policy levels owing to the diversity of views regarding religion. Cooling's report, 'Doing God in Education' (DGIE), argued about the place of religious and non-religious worldviews in education (Cooling, 2010). He opposed the idea of disregarding the existence of beliefs and worldviews for fear of indoctrination. The humanists' views that religious faith is 'irrelevant clutter', were countered by Cooling as he proposed that the common values of humanity, rational knowledge and shared values should be regarded as a glue for a plural society. Sullivan, similar to Cooling (2010) believed that 'religious faith in the context of education should be considered as an asset rather than an enemy' (2012; p.183). According to Sullivan (2012), educational practices were inevitably influenced by a person's worldviews. When these worldviews were shaped by one's religion, the boundaries between religion and education were contested. It is here that disputes occurred over the extent to which religion or religious practices should be exercised in state-supported schools as clearly, both state and religion were interested in the education of children (Hammond and Machacek, 2011; p.402).

Although a large bulk of literature on religion in Britain is still based on Christianity, 'the growing presence of other faith communities in general and the Muslim population in particular' (Davie, 2015; p.10) qualifies Muslims (in England) to be included in the debate which problematises religion and religious discourse in England. Following the 9/11 events, religion, (especially Islam) was perceived as a powerful motivator which had the potential to cause serious harm in a supposedly "secular" and "plural" European society (Copley, 2005). However, with similar events succeeding 9/11, such as the London bombings in 2005 (often referred to as 7/7), debates about keeping faith as private and not discussing religious beliefs in public places increased. At the same time, when people were disconcerted with religion and religious beliefs, there was more talk about religion in the British society than ever before and this subsequently increased the amount of research undertaken in this field (Davie, 2016).

For the pluralist British society to function effectively and harmoniously, the Swann Report (1985) proposed that members of all ethnic groups, majority as well as minority, should participate actively within a framework of commonly accepted shared values and practices. In particular, the report advocated for the integration of ethnic minority communities in the British society, such that they were able to maintain the most essential elements of their ethnic identity, for example adherence to a specific religious faith. However, the accommodation of post-immigration ethno-religious minorities, a phenomenon which Modood (Modood, 2015, 2013) calls 'multiculturalism', is subject to controversy. This is especially so, since global events and trends (such as those described above) led the British Muslims to regard themselves as the 'subject of public debate and focus for social security policy in British society' (Gilliat-Ray, 2010; p.262). Thus, if some religious groups and identities were stigmatised, it can be argued that to what extent would minorities in question feel able to value the religious aspect of their identity

(Modood, 2010), especially when for most of them, 'religion has assumed a primacy or at least a salience' (Modood, 2015; p.9).

Apart from the abundant academic literature on religion in Britain, a host of commissioned reports have been published on this subject which shows that the whole question of religion and belief in the British society is being debated and investigated widely. To name a few, Nick Spencer, the Director of Research at a Public Theology think tank (Theos) in his two subsequent reports *"Doing God: A future for faith in the public sphere"* and *"Neither private not privileged: The role of Christianity in Britain today"* argued for the inclusion of faith in the public arena while advocating the significant role faith plays in contributing to social harmony in the public life (Spencer, 2006). In particular, Spencer focused on Christianity and proclaimed that similar to other religions, the idea of public/common good is embedded in the Christian tradition, hence arguing that there are 'a number of more positive reasons why religious groups would play a significant role in British public life in the twenty first century' (Spencer, 2008; p.13). In her report, *"Living with difference: Community, diversity and the common good"* written for the Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life, which aims to promote multidisciplinary study of relationships between Christians, Jews and Muslims, Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss debated how religious and belief identities of people could act both as a good and as a bad. By acknowledging the differences in the 'sense of personal identity, narrative, relationships and isolation' caused by different religious traditions (Butler-Sloss, 2015; p.7), the author of this report argued for the importance of religion and belief in the UK.

In a more recent report requested by government officials to review integration and opportunity in isolated and deprived communities, Dame Louise Casey highlighted the religious and cultural practices of certain communities that not only contributed to their social and economic isolation,

but also threatened their commitment to British values and laws (Louise, 2016). Although The Casey Review (TCR) affirmed the value of religion in society and recognised the importance of interfaith work in improving social cohesion and equality, its disproportionate focus on Muslims was somewhat alarming. Members of the Christian Muslim Forum expressed their frustration over the singling out of Muslims as being the main problem with regards to integration and felt that the unnecessary conflation of Asian and Muslim identities did not provide a solution to the issue of integration (Hakim, 2017). According to Modood (2015), the transmutation of identities, where the colour identities (such as Black) evolved into ethnic identities (for example Pakistani) and finally into religious identities (such as Muslims) has made religion more prominent in the public sphere. Hence, it is worth exploring whether challenges faced by Christianity in UK in terms of justifying and legitimising 'a role for the Christian faith in the public sphere' (Davie, 2015) have any similarities with the challenges faced by Islam and Muslims in England.

At an institutional level, the formal checks implemented to assess schools in terms of pupil achievement complying with external standards of performance led to the creation of a performative culture in schools (Day, 2005; p.574). Ball (2000) explained the term 'performativity' as 'a culture and mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of control, attrition and change' (p. 1). He critiqued the heightened emphasis on performance and productivity measures as a means of judging the quality and worth of organisations and argued that for some practitioners, performativity posed a threat to their authentic professional practice. This led to an inner conflict in terms of compromising personal beliefs and commitments (Ball, 2003a). Day (2002), on the other hand, suggested that the increased accountability of teachers and headteachers limited their autonomy and intensified the pressure on them to comply with competency-based agendas. Thus, when excellence and improvement are the 'driving forces' behind teachers' practices (Ball, 2003b), the question arises

that how important are beliefs in selecting one's actions especially when those actions are judged by others in relation to organisational performance?

The place of religion in the public sphere in general, and education in particular, is usually debated in relation to specific issues like religious worship, or the teaching of Religious Education (RE). In England, Religious Education (RE) is mandatory in state schools and even though efforts are made to teach about world's religions, the Anglican thought still dominates (Hammond and Machacek, 2011). Similarly, as part of the guidance for local-authority-maintained schools, there should be an act of collective worship in state schools which must be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, though not distinctive of any particular Christian denomination' (DfE, 1994). The status of such statutory guidance in relation to religion is particularly contested by the British Humanist Association (BHA) who campaign against religious influence in education by eliminating collective worship from schools and abolishing faith schools (Cooling, 2012). While much of the debate, in the UK, about handling religious beliefs and religious commitment in education revolves around Christianity (Cooling, 2007; Spencer, 2008; Voas and Crockett, 2005; Kettell, 2009), some parallels can be drawn for people of other faiths (Muslims in particular) in order to address the challenge of managing personal commitment to strongly-held beliefs in a position of power (Cooling, 2010).

Owing to the increasing diversity in British schools comprising multiple religions and/or no religion, Cooling (2010) in his report DGIE, emphasised the need to express one's faith in a 'carefully managed' way. For this purpose, he proposed the use of the Code of Practice published by the RE Council of England and Wales in 2009, which outlined seven principles along with exemplifications, to help teachers of RE overcome the conflict of their sense of integrity in relation to their own beliefs. The authors of the practice code recommended that the

seven stated principles be used by 'teachers of any subject who address issues of religion and belief in their own area' (Everyone matters in the classroom: A practice of code for teachers of RE). Drawing from this code, Cooling asserted that 'beliefs need managing professionally' (Cooling, 2010; p.63) in order to legitimise their use in an educational context (Cooling, 2007) Cooling's pragmatic approach to take religious beliefs seriously for active participation in a religiously plural society was contradicted by scholars, most notably by Michael Hand (Hand, 2012, 2014).

The place of religion in the public sphere, in general, and in education in particular could possibly influence the discourses of religion used by people working in state institutions. Whether such public discourses can/should be religious especially when used by people of faith, again goes back to the contested place of religion in public sphere. According to Stringer, religious discourse in the society was discouraged despite the fact that the current British government was trying to encourage the Church of England to re-establish itself as the 'dominant voice of religion' (2013; p.171). In a study conducted in England to investigate the views of Christian Religious Education (RE) teachers regarding a faith-based teacher identity, the problematic relationship between faith and professional role was revealed (Bryan and Revell, 2011a). Teachers who participated in this study were reluctant to associate their professional practices with their faith. A number of explanations were proposed by the authors for the marginalisation of faith by the teachers. These included adhering to the 'secular' norms of the society, the hegemonic discourse of the British society leading the teachers to use value-neutral terms and the assumption that 'exposure to faith in a variety of educational settings can lead to indoctrination' (Bryan and Revell, 2011; p.147).

On the one hand, findings of the above-mentioned study resonated with the recent report on religion and belief in British public life which stated that 'religion has the potential to be both a public good and public bad, and governments must have due regard for it' (Butler-Sloss, 2015; p.14). On the other hand, parallel to the Christian professionals, Bryan and Revell's study provided a basis for exploring the discourses used by Muslim professionals in public institutions in England; a field which is very scarcely researched. Stringer argued that the new public discourses on religion treated Islam as an 'archetypal religion' (2013; p.171) which was misrepresented as being associated with radicalisation, social disintegration, extremism and an affront to Britishness (Revell, 2012; p.78). Such interpretations are valuable since 'religion is not an independent subject matter just sitting there for all to see, but a term that its user chooses to associate with certain kinds of phenomenon' (Paden, 1992 cited in Hulsether, 2005). Thus, it can be argued that an interpretive frame of inquiry can help find out how Muslim professionals construct the meaning of religion in a public role in a multicultural society.

2.4.1.2. Religion in Pakistan and Pakistani education system

Religion is often regarded as the main driving force behind the creation of Pakistan in 1947. While accounts of various scholars and historians (Alavi, 1988; Weiss, 1986; Toor, 2011; Jaffrelot, 2015) suggested that the founding father of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah (popularly known as *Quaid-e-Azam*, 'the great leader') did not intend to make Pakistan a theocratic state, rather a state where Muslims of India could preserve their religious identity, Islam continued to be portrayed as the 'sole basis of nationality' in the newly-founded Pakistan (Jalal, 2014; p.51). Debating the historical facts about the role of religion during the Pak-India split (at the time of the British withdrawal) is a tedious task owing to the varied interpretations of people who have written about the history of Pakistan. According to Jalal (2014), from the time the State of

Pakistan was named the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the country 'made too much of religion in its nationalist narratives' (p.50). Following the popular discourse that Pakistan 'was created as an Islamic country and Islamisation is merely the fulfilment of that heritage' (Richter, 1986; p.130), the effects of the 'Islamization' process are evident in all spheres of life in Pakistan, including education.

The military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988) laid the earliest foundations of the process of Islamisation in Pakistan. Islam was used for political benefits not only by the military dictator, but also by other ruling politicians including various Islam-oriented parties (Richter, 1986). The use of Islam for the fulfilment of personal objectives led to an increased emphasis on Islam (Jalal, 2014; p.50) which resulted in the unification of the national and religious identity of people living in Pakistan. Owing to the number of religious minorities (mostly including Hindus, Sikhs, Christians) and diverse ethnic groups (Punjabis, Pakhtuns, Sindhis and Baluch) comprising the country, imagining the Pakistani nation solely in terms of religion was debated not only by the minority religious groups, but also by the different ethnic groups since they had different interpretations of Islam based on regional and cultural differences (Durrani and Dunne, 2010; p.217).

The link between education and the formation of a religious identity has been contested by a number of academic researchers, in and outside Pakistan (Khan, 1999; Dean, 2005; Lall, 2008; Ashraf, 2009; Durrani and Dunne, 2010a; Hussain, Salim and Arif, 2011; Afzal, 2013; Hussain and Safiq, 2016). In a study sponsored by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) to evaluate religious bias in public school textbooks, the Peace and Education Foundation (PEF) staff found that participants of the study (teachers and students) correlated Pakistani nationalism with Islamic identity. Although this study revealed 'clear

demonstration of tolerance, understanding and acceptance in both public schools and *madrasahs*' (PEF, 2016; p.5), Islam continued to be a chief marker in forming the beliefs and attitudes of the participants. As a belief system, Islam had become part of the everyday lives of the Pakistanis and they could not see themselves separately from it (Khan, 1999). Thus, it was difficult to imagine the regional cultures of Pakistan which constituted the country, without Islam.

The education system in Pakistan, since its independence in 1947, has been dominated by a hierarchical culture of positional authority. Over the years, the various reforms which were introduced to transform the system of education in the country strengthened the centrality of power instead of reducing it (Memon, 2010; p.280). The bureaucratic structures in the schools coupled with insufficient management experience, led the headteachers/principals to maintain their 'status quo' instead of implementing the changes suggested in the reform policies. The 'top-down bureaucratic' model of state/government school system in Pakistan is quite similar to other South Asian countries (Simkins, Sisum and Memon, 2003). In light of their added roles in schools and increased expectations from them, the need to develop the headteachers is recognized by both public and private sector educationists. Although the importance of school heads in the state school system, which educates the large majority of children in the country, is fully acknowledged, their selection and recruitment continues to take place on seniority basis. That is, the selection of headteachers is done based on the number of years they have spent in the teaching profession. In most educational institutions, the myth still holds that any experienced teacher can become a school head (Memon, 2010).

In a study conducted to explore the perceptions and behaviours of headteachers which they formed in the particular context of their schools, Simkins and colleagues (1998) identified key differences between public/government and private school headteachers in Karachi, the largest

metropolitan city in Pakistan. For example, government/state school headteachers had to abide by strict bureaucratic rules and structures, set by the state, for all matters pertaining to the administration of their schools. As a result, they had far less autonomy in management and staffing decisions such as appointments, discipline and salary matters. While the objective of this study was to understand the impact of school system (government versus private) on the leadership practices of secondary school headteachers, the authors were also interested in finding out if the personal values of the headteachers influenced the way they enacted their roles (Simkins et al., 1998). Nevertheless, the significance of personal values was not clear since the findings of the study emphasised the impact of the nature of the school system and therefore asserted the 'maintenance aspects' of government school headteachers rather than explaining the 'why' aspects of their managerial behaviour.

Another study conducted in Karachi involved teachers as well (Simkins, Sisum and Memon, 2003). The findings revealed that amidst the bureaucratic controls imposed by the government, the individual headteachers' personal philosophy and personality type had a strong influence on how they led and managed their schools (Simkins, Sisum and Memon, 2003). Additionally, the authors identified national culture as an important variable influencing the leadership behaviour of headteachers. The researchers' claim that 'the cultural expectations generated and powers granted within particular school systems' (Simkins, Sisum and Memon, 2003; p.288), contextualised the broad frameworks of expectations from school leaders, which were further refined by the headteachers' personal orientations. Nevertheless, the complex interplay between the power and accountability generated by the state school system (Simkins, Sisum and Memon, 2003) did not offer much evidence about the extent to which the individual headteachers' values and beliefs were informed by their personal faith.

The role of religion in relation to education has its roots in the National Education Policy announced in 1979, which aimed to introduce Pakistan's ideology by equating it 'entirely with Islam and… something that needs to be defended and held on to at all costs' (Afzal, 2013; p.6). The use of education as a means of indoctrination by 'forcing an ideological straitjacket on the idea of Pakistan' is now being widely debated in relation to curriculum and textbook reforms (Nayyar, 2013; p.54). The current educational system and its Islamization further strengthened the position of Islam as the state ideology and according to Haqqani (2004), 'for the foreseeable future, Islam will remain a significant factor in Pakistan's politics' (p.85). Thus, the discourse used by Pakistani Muslims not only confirms that state and religion are inseparable, but also resonates with Habermas's argument that religion is a 'source of energy' for these people.

The Islamisation of education in Pakistan and its possible impact on creating religious bias has been the subject of many recent reports on school curricula (Hussain, Salim and Arif, 2011; Afzal, 2013; Hussain and Safiq, 2016). While these reports focused on the content of school textbooks (including private schools, state schools and *madrassahs*) and its likely impact on the perceptions of teachers and students regarding religious minorities and their beliefs, they did not examine how, if at all, the expression of religion of the [state school] headteachers was influenced by the Islamisation policies. This research will, therefore, add a new dimension to the existing literature on educational practices of headteachers in Pakistan, by providing insights into the relationship between state, religion and professional practices of people working in state institutions.

2.4.2. Micro- (personal) level

For several years, great effort has been devoted to study the role of educational leaders in the context of school effectiveness and school improvement. However, much of the research neglected to consider 'school principals as people' (Notman, 2012; p.470). Considering the too-frequent educational, social and economic reforms to which the school leaders have to respond, it was crucial to understand *what* helps them in sustaining their positions while conforming to the varied demands of their professional role (Notman, 2012). In doing so, a knowledge of various non-school factors such as personal characteristics, school characteristics as well as characteristics defining the external social environment were proposed to help understand the leadership actions of headteachers (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan and Lee, 1982). Having reviewed how religion plays out at the societal and institutional levels in England and Pakistan, I will now move on to discuss the manifestation of religion at the personal level. Returning briefly to the functional understanding of religion, which describes religion as a set of beliefs and values that influence the behaviour and practices of people who ascribe to it, in the following pages, I will present a systematic review of how values and religious commitment vary for Muslims living in diverse national contexts of England and Pakistan.

2.4.2.1. Personal values and beliefs

At the micro-level, personal characteristics of headteachers contribute significantly to how they act in a given situation. Several researchers agreed that one of the key characteristics which had the greatest potential to influence the leadership behaviour of headteachers was their personal values. For example, in their study on effective school leaders, Day and colleagues (2001b) emphasised that individual value systems of headteachers led to effective leadership. In their

empirical research, which aimed to identify the key components of effective school leadership 'through the eyes of those who experience and witness it', the authors claimed that effective leadership was a contextual and relational concept (Day, Harris and Hadfield, 2001a). That is, the headteachers' behaviour and practices were both contingent as well as value-led. However, the authors did not find any evidence of the headteachers prioritising their personal power over their positional authority, even though they communicated their vision through a set of values (ibid; p.20).

A similar criterion of 'effective leadership' was used as a base when studying leadership in multi-ethnic schools in England. The only difference was that the five headteachers were selected from multi-ethnic schools. While most of the literature exploring school leaders' values linked the selection of the leaders with effective and/or outstanding schools (Gold et al., 2003; Day et al., 2000; Walker et al., 2005; Blair, 2002), this approach might not be sufficient. A more recent study exploring the conceptualisation of value-based leadership behaviour pointed out that such studies neglected to consider the evidence of values in low-performing school leaders (Warwas, 2015). In her study based on a survey of 56 German schools, Warwas (2015) proposed a values-based contingency leadership model and suggested that an explanation of such a model would be more robust 'if applied in highly contrasting settings' (p.328). Therefore, it can be argued that studying school leadership in relation to school effectiveness and/or the headteachers' effectiveness is not enough. Additionally, there is a need to explore the sources from which different headteachers derive their values from; an approach which is scarcely researched in the field of educational leadership.

The significance of values in educational leadership has been established through a number of empirical research studies (Day et al., 2000; Moore, George and Halpin, 2002; Gold et al., 2003;

Campbell, Gold and Lunt, 2003). Along with providing evidence of the different values exemplified in the headteachers' leadership actions, the 'data-driven descriptive accounts' of the headteachers allowed the researchers to categorise these values as personal, moral, educational and professional (Gold et al., 2003; Campbell, Gold and Lunt, 2003). Although a number of examples were presented for each of these categories, the authors were inconclusive about the source of these values. Whereas Gold et al. (2003) deliberated about the origin of the headteachers' values, findings from Campbell et al.'s (2003) study were limited to defining the nature of the headteachers' values and the manner in which they were developed. Day et al. (2000)'s study, on the other hand, used multiple perspectives to understand school leadership in order to show the importance of individual values of headteachers. Nevertheless, none of these studies took into account the source to which the headteachers could attribute their values.

The idea of recognising values, ethics and the moral dimension of school leadership as important has received the attention of a number of scholars (Grace, 1995, 2000; Greenfield, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2009). Sergiovanni used the analogy of a heart for the personal values and beliefs of a leader to claim that in order to make schools strong and resilient, school leaders needed to strengthen the heartbeat. He used the elements social capital, community and relational trust to capture the meaning of heartbeat (Sergiovanni, 2009; p.9). According to Sergiovanni, the 'human character' of schools required school leaders to exhibit personal qualities that strengthened the socially constructed relationships between school members. In the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness) project, a commonly acknowledged example of a large scale cross-cultural study of leadership in 60 different countries, the researchers aimed to identify and describe the relationship between 'national culture', 'organisational processes' and 'leadership' (House et al., 2004). While evaluating the GLOBE project, Yukl (2013) stressed the

need to understand leaders' values and behaviours in relation to their personality types and leadership traits (p.357).

Considering the importance of value-led (Day et al., 2000) and moral leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992) and increasing emphasis on understanding diversity in British schools, the need to explore the impact of religion on educational leadership cannot be ignored. In a recent white paper on educational excellence, the need to increase diversity in educational leadership was formally recognised by the Department for Education (DfE, 2016). According to a report, the diverse leadership talent pool included under-represented groups such as women, people from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, and lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) teachers (Morgan, 2016; p.49). Within this under-represented group, only 3.2% of school heads came from black and minority ethnic groups compared to 7.3% of all teachers; whereas only 37.1% of the headteachers were female as compared to 75.2% of all classroom teachers. Based on these statistics, proposals were put forward to recruit school leaders from under-represented groups such as women and people from BME backgrounds (Morgan, 2016).

The under-representation of BME leaders has been identified by various researchers (Bush et al., 2005; Bush, Glover and Sood, 2006; Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Campbell-Stephens, 2009; Shah and Shaikh, 2010). According to Bush and colleagues, 'where leaders are working in their own ethnic communities, they are often able to derive the support needed to persevere in the midst of perceived racism and discrimination' (2005; p.68). As part of the few studies conducted on black and minority ethnic leaders, Bush et al.'s (2005) research aimed to understand the experiences of these leaders in terms of the perceived advantages and disadvantages of being a BME school leader and how the selected leaders overcame these barriers. While the need to increase participation of minority ethnic leaders in schools has been

acknowledged, there is not much evidence on the significance of having Muslim school leaders in British schools.

Addressing issues of Muslim youth's identity in multi-ethnic schools, 'the effect of leadership values, perceptions and practices' on the learning experiences of Muslim students was regarded crucial (Shah, 2006b; p. 216). Considering the growing number of Muslim pupils in British schools, school leaders were expected to understand and acknowledge this group of pupils in a way that they 'feel like equal and valued members of the student community' (Shah, 2016a; p.127). This, according to Shah (2016a) added a 'value dimension' to the leadership role of headteachers (Shah, 2016; p.127) which might or might not be influenced by the headteachers' religion. Elsewhere, Shah (2006a, 2016) argued that leaders' ethics, particularly those attributed to a religion, shaped the worldviews that underpinned their actions. While the theoretical conceptualisation of Islamic beliefs and values are somewhat similar for Muslims in different parts of the world, their practical manifestation can vary to a large extent.

According to Shah (2016), research on the impact of values and beliefs of Muslims on education and educational leadership was very limited. Owing to the increasing diasporas of Muslims in the UK, Shah and colleagues (2006b, 2009, 2010, 2013; Shah and Conchar, 2009; Shah and Iqbal, 2011; Shah and Shaikh, 2010) emphasised the need to recognise the diversity in the ideological perspectives of British Muslims and the resulting impact on educational leadership. Research projects on cross-cultural comparisons in educational administration showed that the ideologies and practices of people coming from similar faith backgrounds could vary owing to their cultural differences (Shah, 2016; p.43). Although the Qur'an offers guidance for the everyday actions of Muslims, both personal and social, the conceptualisation of this revealed guidance differs between Muslim societies owing to the difference in interpretation of the religious texts. It is

therefore necessary to investigate the impact of ideological beliefs and values on educational leadership as conceptualised and informed by Muslims living in different national contexts.

The relationship between religion, knowledge and education in Islam 'creates a discourse of educational leadership that is elevated to the level of a sacred duty and a religious responsibility' (Shah, 2016; p.44). As an epitome of moral perfection, the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) performed various leadership roles in military, politics, society *and* education. It is for this reason that many Muslims regard teaching as a prophetic profession; i.e. the profession of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). Following the legacy of the last Prophet (PBUH), the role of educational leaders and teachers, in Islamic philosophy, was to bring out the potential abilities of every human being while developing and nurturing their morals and conduct (Shah, 2006a). Thus, the prescribed sources of guidance for [Muslim] leaders are proclaimed to be the Qur'an and the biography of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), both of which emphasised the development of a strong Islamic moral character of the leader (Beekun and Badawi, 1999).

In Islam, the basic tenets of moral character were also described as traits/characteristics of Muslim leaders (Beekun and Badawi, 1999; Aabed, 2006). In his study of Islamic leadership theory and practice, Aabed (2006) drew from an extensive review of Islamic literature, ten most essential moral qualities of Muslim leaders. These were conviction, mutual consultation, knowledge, eloquence, justice, patience, enterprise, leniency, self-sacrifice and humility. Regarding these moral qualities as principles, Aabed (2006) drew parallels between Islamic leadership principles and western leadership approaches such as Power-influence approach, Moral-leadership approach, Servant-leadership approach, Transactional and Transformational-leadership approach and finally the Trait approach. While the objective of Aabed's (2006) study was to compare Islamic leadership principles with Western leadership approaches, other

researchers who had written about Islamic leadership principles had done so either from a theoretical and theological perspective or investigating such principles in Muslim leaders who worked in Islamic organisations (Beekun and Badawi, 1999; Shah, 2006a; Aabed, 2006; Abuznaid, 2006; Ali, 2009; Ahmad and Ogunsola, 2011; Faris and Parry, 2011; Almoharby and Neal, 2013). Although the relationship between Islam and educational leadership principles had been established by these scholars, and many more, there is very little evidence on how Muslim [school] leaders working in secular/non-faith institutions interpret their leadership principles.

While most Muslims acknowledge the guiding role of Islam, there are significant variations in the interpretation and manifestation of religion owing to the differences in cultures. Although, for most Muslims, religion is accepted as a complete guide to life in all matters and activities, the extent to which they practice it varies. Whether personal values and beliefs of Muslims are informed by their religion was contested on the grounds that the place accorded to religion is different in different societies and cultures (Shah, 2016; p.42). While Shah argued about the impact of Islam on the personal values of Muslims, Dimmock (2005b) highlighted the value dimension of school leadership in relation to school context. Drawing on a project based on 'underresearched multi-ethnic urban' schools, Dimmock (2005) illustrated the importance of personal values for school leaders, and their application within the context of their respective schools (p.84). Although the findings of the project revealed that leaders of the selected multi-ethnic schools demonstrated strong values, there was little evidence about how these values were formed (Walker et al., 2005; Dimmock, 2005a). Despite the importance of values-driven leadership emphasised in the project, the formulation and development of such values did not take into account the ethnic or religious diversity of the headteachers. The many questions raised through the project included 'what values, how are values formed, how are values shaped by context and what is the relationship between values and practices?' (Dimmock, 2005; p.95).

Having reviewed the significance of values for school leaders and for Muslim school leaders in the English context, I will now move on to discuss the implication of values and beliefs for school leaders in Pakistan.

Considering the importance of context in understanding leadership practices of headteachers, the manifestation of values (religious or non-religious) is likely to be different in Pakistan, a country where Islam is the national religion. Various research studies conducted on educational leadership in Pakistan suggested that religion as a contextual factor played an important role in guiding the leadership behaviour of headteachers. According to Khaki,

> the context of Pakistani schools presents an interesting tapestry, in which religion is the major yarn, but many other colored threads, like religion and science, modernity and tradition, mix into the complex pattern. (2010; p.118)

Other empirical studies on the roles and behaviours of headteachers reflected a strong commitment to Islam and Islamic values (Hussain et al., 2011; Khaki, 2010; Bana, 2010). On the one hand, headteachers researched in these studies expressed a moral obligation to emphasise Islam. But at the same time, they acknowledged the importance of being 'knowledgeable and skilful' professionals who were effective in teaching and managing their schools (Khaki, 2010). According to Memon (2010), the headteachers' realisation of their professional responsibilities was attributed to the bureaucratic rules and structures of a highly centralised education system. In another study, while comparing the perceptions and behaviours of headteachers in private and state school contexts in Pakistan, the authors concluded that the perceptions of state school headteachers reflected their obligation to perform their roles according to the regulations set by the local department of education (Simkins et al., 1998). While all these studies revealed something about the headteachers' personal philosophy regarding their professional and religious

obligations in a leadership position, none of them aimed to find out the particular influence of the headteachers' own religion on their leadership practices. Although religious values were an integral part of the headteachers' personal philosophy, the authors of these studies described a number of professional values which the headteachers acquired from various professional development programmes. The impact of religious values on the headteachers' professional role, however, was not clear.

While exploring the beliefs and behaviours of effective headteachers in government and non-government schools in Pakistan, Khaki's study concluded that the dominance of Islamic values led the selected headteachers to think of their profession as 'prophetic' (Khaki, 2005). That is, all selected headteachers derived their inspiration from the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) who set an example of being a leader both in worldly and spiritual matters. Another study carried out in Karachi, Pakistan, investigated the impact of headteachers' personal values on their leadership practices and established a link between the upbringing of individual headteachers and their religiosity (articulated in the form of personal religious values) (Baig, 2011). According to Baig, the religious orientation of the selected headteachers influenced the school culture, school structure and the headteachers' relations with the community (2011).

In addition to acknowledging the pivotal role of the headteacher, Branson et al. explored in a study, conducted in Pakistan, the influence of headteachers' values on student behaviour (Branson, Baig and Begum, 2015). In the 'model of influence and regulation' proposed by Baig (2011), student behaviour was one of the many school characteristics which was influenced by the personal values of the principals. In a country where religion (Islam) and state are closely intertwined, there is a heightened expectation that headteachers and teachers will help the students develop an Islamic pro-social behaviour (Branson et al., 2015). Therefore, the emphasis

placed by school leaders on Islam and their own religious inclination can also be regarded as a response to such expectations.

2.4.2.2. Religion and religiosity

Religion as a system of values and beliefs has a great impact on the behaviour and interactions of people who ascribe to a religion (Shah, 2010; Dimmock and Walker, 2005). In an international study of Muslim religiosity spanning over seven years, Hassan (2007) concluded that religion, for Muslims, was the essence of their identity whether they were living in Muslim-majority or Muslim-minority countries. However, he argued that the interpretation of being religious was different for different people. Such a difference is usually equated with the term 'religiosity' which according to Holdcroft (2006) is a measure of individuals' knowledge about their religion, beliefs, piousness, faith, religiousness and the extent to which they feel able to use their religion and live according to it. While Hassan concluded from his study that religion played an important role in the everyday lives of most Muslims, one question that needs to be asked, however, is whether it is the 'religion' or the 'religiosity' that influences the professional practices of the Muslims more than the other.

Exploring how leadership practices of Christian and Muslim leaders were influenced by their religious affiliation and religiosity, Hage and Posner (2015)'s study was useful in suggesting that the extent to which leaders could express their knowledge of Islam and their religious beliefs and piousness, referred to as *religiosity*, varied depending on where they lived. While other authors (Fernando and Jackson, 2006; King, Bell and Lawrence, 2009; Pekerti and Sendjaya, 2010) argued that the religion of leaders influenced their behaviour, personality and value systems, Hage and Posner (2015) concluded that for Muslim leaders, religion rather than religiosity

influenced their interpersonal relationships in the workplace. These findings concerned the authors since their study failed to answer the question that 'how can it be that religious affiliation somehow influences leadership behaviour but not the strength of one's adherence to the principles and standards of that faith?' (Hage and Posner, 2015; p.406). One way to answer this question can be to consider the dimensions of individual religiosity as well while conceptualising the phenomenon of religion.

In their seminal work on religious piety, Charles Y. Glock (1965) proposed five dimensions of religiosity namely (1) Religious Belief (The Ideological Dimension), (2) Religious Practice (The Ritualistic Dimension), (3) Religious Feeling (The Experiential Dimension), (4) Religious Knowledge (The Intellectual Dimension) and (5) Religious Effects (The Experiential Dimension). Although these five dimensions were subsequently used as an analytic framework for studying Christianity and critiqued for their appropriateness (or lack of) for Muslim religious commitment, Hassan (2007) argued that Islam, like Christianity and Judaism is an Abrahamic religion, which shares similar theological and philosophical principles. Even if religious commitment in all Abrahamic religions could be analysed using a common framework, it is not necessary that the depth of religious commitment for Muslims directly plays out in the workplace. That Muslim countries exhibit higher levels of religiosity (McCleary and Barro, 2006) might not be true in its entirety since organisational culture can undermine the religiosity of Muslims in relation to their behaviour and interactions with people in the workplace (Hage and Posner, 2015).

In the case of England, the religious and ethnic plurality of Muslims makes it difficult to understand if any one form of identity (religious or ethnic) will influence the working of Muslims more than the other. While a substantial amount of research has been done on the religion and

ethnicity of British Muslims in multi-ethnic diverse schools and issues pertaining to student achievement, construction of identities and their possible impact on leadership and management of these schools (Jacobson, 1997; Shah, 2006b; Coleman, 2007; Shah, 2008; Shah and Shaikh, 2010; Shah, 2016a), little or no consideration has been given to the religion and ethnicity of headteachers working in such schools. In schools where Muslim students were in the majority, Muslim community members expressed their concerns about the need for educational leaders to understand the diverse needs of their children (Shah, 2016; p.127). Whether such concerns could be met more effectively by Muslim headteachers is a question that needs more empirical evidence.

In the case of Pakistan, 'being Muslim' and 'being Pakistani' are usually considered synonymous (Durrani and Dunne, 2010a). In this 'synthesised identity', religion has a strong influence on the personal, social and professional lives of most Pakistani Muslims (Abuznaid, 2006). As with most Muslim societies where education and educational leadership are influenced by religious beliefs, in addition to many other belief systems (Shah, 2010), the dominance of religion in the everyday life of most Pakistani Muslims leads them to attribute their personal values to Islam. The religious identity and its expression are so much part of their everyday lives, that Pakistani Muslims seldom think critically about what it means to be a Muslim. This emphasis on Islam could also be attributed to the fact that most Muslims 'absorb and internalise the norms, values and behaviours when they see them exemplified by their parents, peers and others' (Peek, 2005; p.225). The religious commitment among Pakistani Muslims was reflected in their 'Islamic beliefs, rituals, religious devotion and experiential religiosity' (Hassan, 2007; p. 468). Such commitment and religious piety, influenced by factors such as the religious climate in the country and the social and political structure, was also common in other Muslim majority countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Egypt, Iran and Turkey (ibid).

2.5. SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have dealt with the complexity of how or in what ways religion as a subset of culture influences the role of headteachers in international contexts. In doing so, I first reviewed the literature on school leadership theories (*Section 2.2*). I argued that whilst these theories provide frameworks for leadership analysis, they fail to take into account the challenges that the religious and cultural affiliations of headteachers might bring to their profession. I then discussed the Contingency Theory developed by Bush and Glover (2003) which is sensitive to the dynamism of the social and cultural contexts as it influences the way headteachers respond to diverse and unique organisational circumstances. I concede with Bush and Glover's Contingency Theory to the extent in which they focus on school leaders to adapt to the challenges they face in their leadership roles. Staying within the contingency theory as my overarching theoretical understanding, I debated religion and culture as contingent variables that school leaders should be sensitive to. In *Section 2.3*, I unpacked the theories of religion and cross-cultural comparative studies to arrive at a problématique for which this research seeks responses. I argued that limited attention has been given to the dynamics of religion and culture and how they influence the leadership practices of headteachers. For the purpose of this research, I focused on Muslim headteachers and therefore, Islam as a religion and culture in diverse contexts. Finally, informed by the review of theories as well as my empirical investigations for this research, in *Section 2.4*, I proposed a model which takes into account the role of religion as a contingent variable in shaping school leadership in international contexts at three levels, macro (societal), meso (institutional) and micro (personal).

An exploration of various studies relevant to the English and Pakistani schools has recognised a variety of ways in which religion as a contextual factor operates at the macro (national), meso

(institutional) and micro (personal) levels. On the one hand, the role of religion in the national contexts of England and Pakistan has been reviewed to explain the similarities and differences between the headteachers' articulation of religion in a leadership position. On the other hand, religion has been reviewed systematically at the meso and micro levels as well. The micro (personal)-level, conceptualised as internal to the headteachers, constitute elements such as personal values and beliefs and religion and religiosity. The meso (institutional)-level circumscribes the micro-level but at the same time interacts with elements of micro-level to affect the leadership actions of headteachers. The key meso-level factors comprise professional expectations and religious/ethnic diversity/uniformity in schools. The macro (national)-level spans both micro and meso-level elements and reflects its capacity as a multi-directional variable. For this study, the most important contextual factor at the macro-level is the place of religion in the public sphere, in general, and education in particular.

While considering the multi-level contextual framework for the review of literature as well as for the analysis of the findings, not much literature has been found on Muslim headteachers working in state schools. Hence, wherever necessary, gaps have been identified and the addition and contribution to knowledge has been highlighted. Some important gaps include:

a) Little or no research conducted on Muslim headteachers leading state schools in England.

b) Little evidence of the source of values used by Muslim headteachers working in state schools.

c) Few research studies conducted so far that include multiple perspectives of teachers and pupils alongside the headteachers.

d) Few research studies carried out to compare school leadership in England and Pakistan, and none to compare Muslim headteachers who share the same ethnicity (Muslims of a Pakistani heritage).

e) Little evidence on the relationship between religion and public sphere in culturally diverse countries like England and Pakistan.

Keeping the above gaps in mind, the next chapter on Methodology will further elaborate the multiple perspectives approach highlighted in this review. Moreover, the foundation of a comparative review laid down in this chapter, will later feed into the Comparative Discussion Chapter where the gaps identified will be linked with the findings and critically analysed as a way to understand the role of religion in the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers and their underlying principles.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The subject of the present research is to explore how religion is perceived, interpreted and experienced by Muslim headteachers working in state schools in England and Pakistan. Owing to the comparative nature of this research, I began the review of literature, in the previous chapter, by reading about cross-cultural approaches to school leadership. While the literature on cross-cultural comparative studies highlighted the importance of understanding the impact of 'culture' on school leadership, the subject of my research led me to limit the study of culture and focus more on the specific components of culture which directly influenced how religion played out in a professional role. Therefore, my reading of the literature and the objective of this study confirmed the importance of selecting a research design that allowed me to investigate the social phenomenon (defined in Section 3.4) in a way that ensured my sensitivity towards both the research participants *and* the phenomenon being investigated.

This chapter begins by describing the purpose of the present study and the research questions designed following the review of literature. The social phenomenon defined in *Section 3.4* sets the foundation of the investigation carried out in this research. Based on the phenomenon, the ontological and epistemological stance taken informs the research approach, the process of sampling, selection of appropriate research methods, the data collection process and the steps taken to analyse the data.

3.2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This cross-national research is a comparative study of Muslim headteachers working in state schools in England and Pakistan. The purpose for conducting this research was to understand the role of religion in influencing the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers, the principles underlying these actions and the different sources from which the headteachers sought guidance while leading their schools. The idea of comparing the manifestation of religion in a professional role in two culturally diverse countries was derived from a personal interest to study the peculiarities of the lived experiences of Muslim headteachers in two different settings. According to Braun and Clarke, 'qualitative data are understood as accounts that are not produced in the ether. Instead, they are seen to be produced in particular contexts, by participants who come from, and are located within, specific contexts' (Braun and Clarke, 2013; p.21). The leadership actions of headteachers *and* the manifestation of religion in these actions were both difficult to understand without any experiential grounding. Therefore, the objective of conducting a comparative study was to help me in locating the perceptions and actions of Muslim headteachers within a more grounded context.

Coming from a faith background, my moral beliefs and values form the basis of my actions and in most cases, these beliefs and values are grounded in my religion, Islam. Drawing from an intrinsic motivation, I was keen to explore how other Muslims regard the role of religion in a professional role and whether or not they derive their principles and morals from their faith. Taking guidance from religion is a subjective reality based on the inner conviction of those who subscribe to a religion. Therefore, I was interested to find out how such conviction differs for individual Muslims owing to their personal, historical and cultural experiences.

3.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions for this study were designed keeping in mind the main purpose of the study. The primary research question was, 'How do Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan perceive the role of religion in their profession?' To explore this question, five subsidiary research questions were used:

1. What are the principles that underlie the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers?

2. What are the different types of guidance followed by these Muslim headteachers?

3. What contextual factors influence the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan?

4. How do teachers and pupils perceive the role of religion in the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers in their respective schools?

These questions were to be explored with a particular reference to the place of religion in the Muslim headteachers' thinking and the public space within which they carried out their professional duties. The first three questions were aimed towards the headteachers, who were the main research participants for this study. The details they provided about their leadership actions and the underlying principles and how far they deemed their religion relevant in relation to the respective contexts in which they worked, formed the basis for this descriptive qualitative research as they 'emphasised the importance of contextual understanding of social behaviour' (Bryman, 2012; p.401). The fourth research question aimed to obtain multiple perspectives (of teachers and pupils) about the headteachers' leadership actions. Such perspectives allowed for

respondent triangulation as the data sets obtained from teachers' and pupils' accounts acted as a check for what the headteachers did in their specific school environments.

Although the exploration of religion was the basic premise of this research, the investigation about religion was not explicit in the above questions; rather it was implied. That is, by selecting *Muslim* headteachers, my intention was to understand how instrumental, if at all, was religion in influencing their leadership actions since all selected headteachers associated themselves with Islam. This understanding was achieved by emphasising the process of the research (details in *Section 3.11*) whereby headteachers were given sufficient time to reflect on their perceptions about religion, as part of both their personal and social lives. The impact of religion on the headteachers' professional actions was seen as a process which was best understood when the selected headteachers were interviewed in two phases, which were spaced apart by a few months. This allowed for the events and patterns to unfold (Bryman, 2012; p.402) and therefore made the headteachers' accounts of their religion in a leadership role more deep and insightful.

3.4. SOCIAL PHENOMENON AND THE PHILOSOPHICAL PARADIGM

This research is exploratory and descriptive in nature. To fulfil the objective of this research, the social phenomenon for this project has been described as 'the place of religion in a professional role'. The reality of the social phenomenon depended on how the Muslim headteachers constructed and interpreted it. Therefore, the extent to which the principles used and guidance followed by the headteachers in their leadership role was influenced (or not influenced) by their religion, varied for each headteacher. Since the concepts, 'principles' and 'guidance' were understood and interpreted by individual headteachers in different ways, therefore I defined these concepts in the following way.

Principles: The underlying moral rules, beliefs or values that help the headteachers know what is right and wrong and which influence their actions.

Guidance: Guidance is something that is given. For example, an advice or instruction from any source (religious or otherwise), which influences the leadership actions of the headteachers.

These definitions are based on my own knowledge and are context-specific, that is, they are meant to answer the research questions of this research project only.

Owing to its descriptive nature, this research followed a constructivist-interpretive paradigm, i.e. instead of trying to generalise the principles underlying the Muslim headteachers' leadership actions, I studied the selected headteachers for their understanding of religion and observed how this understanding shaped their leadership actions in their respective school contexts (in England and Pakistan). Aiming to 'grasp the subjective meaning' of the social phenomenon (Bryman, 2012; p.712), the constructivist-interpretive paradigm assumes a 'relative ontology, a subjective epistemology and a naturalistic set of methodological procedures' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; p.24). Following a 'social constructivist' worldview, I looked at the understanding that the Muslim headteachers had for the social phenomenon, and how as part of a social world, their ideas about it were reviewed and reworked (Matthews and Ross, 2010) as they reflected on their interaction with other people (staff, pupils, parents and community). Thus, the subjective meanings of the headteachers' experiences were varied and multiple (Creswell, 2013; p.24) and formed/constructed through their interactions with staff, pupils, parents and members of the community.

Following an interpretive stance, the concept of *Verstehen* proposed by Max Weber (Bryman, 2012; p.29) was used to understand the subjective meanings presented in the form of multiple realities constructed socially by the headteachers as a lived experience (Merriam, 2009). While prioritising the headteachers' subjective interpretations of how religion influenced their leadership actions and principles, the interpretivist epistemological position linked well with the ontological position of social constructivism in fulfilling the objective of this research; that is to explore the different perspectives of Muslim headteachers about the social phenomenon and then interpreting these perspectives 'as if through the eyes of the people being researched' (Matthews and Ross, 2010; p.28).

3.5. RESEARCH APPROACH

The selection of an appropriate research strategy depends on an understanding of the philosophical foundations underlying the type of research project. It should be a good match between the type of research, the skills of the researcher and the type of choices available within a selected paradigm (Merriam, 2009). Owing to the interpretive nature of the present research, I chose to place it in the 'Experiential Qualitative Research' camp (Braun and Clarke, 2013; p.21). According to Braun and Clarke, such type of qualitative research is driven by a desire to understand the meanings, views, perspectives and experiences of the participants in order to 'get inside' their heads and prioritise them while reporting (2013; p.21). The understanding of the social phenomenon, described in the previous section, therefore, was not limited by my own imagination and knowledge. Instead the research was driven by the headteachers' personal and social experiences and the language used by them was viewed as a window that provided insight into their interior (Braun and Clarke, 2013; p.24).

Within the qualitative paradigm, selecting an appropriate strategy for my research project was not an easy task. For example, the philosophical assumptions set for this study called for a careful consideration of 'what' was to be studied; the phenomenon of how religion influences the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers? Or the Muslim headteachers themselves? Secondly, the comparative nature of the study necessitated the use of a research design which would allow me to compare Muslim headteachers in both countries while giving attention to details to ensure 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973b). An idea proposed by Clifford Geertz in 1973, 'thick description' calls for an event to be explained within its context while bearing in mind the 'grammar' of faith traditions. That is, the description provided by the selected headteachers, of their experiences, had to be interpreted in light of their particular denomination so as not to isolate the phenomenon under study (also see *Section 3.13*).

For obtaining 'thick description', I intended to seek multiple perspectives of teachers and students to understand the phenomenon in a more grounded context. My selection of a methodology, therefore, had to ensure experiential grounding for the phenomenon under study such that the exploration of how leadership actions of Muslim headteachers are influenced by their religion was not limited to the perspectives of the Muslim headteachers; rather it also took into consideration how teachers and students experienced it. Finally, the nature of the phenomenon (religion in particular) was such that the methods *and* the methodology needed to take into account the sensitivities associated with talking about personal or public religious beliefs. Therefore, I had to select a methodology which supported the use of those methods which would provide insight into the phenomenon in the best possible way.

In a research that follows a comparative design, a more obvious form that it usually entails is a comparative 'case study' approach in which two or more cases using similar (or slightly different)

methods are compared with the intention to understand a social phenomenon in meaningfully contrasting cases or situations (Bryman, 2012; p.72). According to Hartas (2010), a case study approach provides in-depth analysis of the attitudes and practices of people resulting in deeper understanding of the origin, causes and motives of their actions. Using a comparative design, my research aimed to examine the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers in light of their religion in two different national contexts (England and Pakistan) while using the same research instruments. The selected Muslim headteachers were, therefore, regarded as the "cases" to be studied. However, keeping in mind the purpose of my research, headteachers were not the only subject of the case. Since the phenomenon (role of religion in a professional role) was of equal importance, the selection of an appropriate methodology was a pragmatic decision based on the research questions and the overall aim of this project. Keeping this rationale in mind, I adopted elements of (a) Multiple Case Study approach and (b) Phenomenology and integrated these elements to match the objectives of the research. In the paragraphs that follow, I will justify the selection of these two approaches in relation to the purpose of my research.

3.5.1. Multiple Case Study

While there is a difference in opinion about using 'case study' as a methodology and a strategy of inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014) or a choice of what is to be studied (Stake, 2005), there is agreement on the bounding of the case (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Stake, 2005; Matthews and Ross, 2010; Bryman, 2012; Yin, 2014). That is, the selected case should not be abstract; rather it should be a real-life phenomenon that has a concrete manifestation (Yin, 2014; p.34). According to Mathews and Ross (2010), it is important that the research study relates to some aspects of the selected case as described by the research questions.

The boundaries of the case enable the researcher to understand what is to be studied about the case and what is not (Matthews and Ross, 2010).

In the present research, the headteachers and the phenomenon were inseparable. For this reason, I adopted Stake's definition of a case study in which he says that [case study] is '*not* a methodological choice but a choice of *what* is to be studied' (2005; p.443). In particular, I regarded my 'cases' as 'instrumental'; i.e. the 'case' was of secondary interest, more importantly the case (s) facilitated my understanding of the social phenomenon (Stake, 2005; p.445). Nevertheless, there was equal (if not more) emphasis on the cases (Muslim headteachers) since the phenomenon of interest was abstract and not eligible to be a 'case' unless intrinsically bounded in the headteachers. Hence the exploration of the manifestation of religion in the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers qualified the headteachers to be 'case examples' of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009; p.40). The Multiple Case Study approach used for this study was an 'instrumental study extended to several cases' (Stake, 2005; p.445). The ten Muslim headteachers selected from England and Pakistan were 'studied jointly' in order to explore the phenomenon of interest (Stake, 2005; p.445).

Since the study of the cases was limited to the extent of describing and interpreting the phenomenon only, the term Multiple Case Study was used to answer the question, "what is to be studied". Moreover, I was keen to compare the multiple cases, i.e. the Muslim headteachers, as the review of literature suggested that a number of contextual factors influenced the headteachers' religion *and* leadership actions working in different contexts. Keeping the phenomenon of interest in mind, the manifestation of religion for the two sets of headteachers needed to be explored at individual, institutional and national levels. Thus, a Multiple Case Study approach provided me with the opportunity to do a *cross-case* and *across-case* comparison; that is, I

compared the ten selected headteachers both at an individual level, and at a national level. Defining my cases as 'instrumental', I was able to bound the phenomenon in a case such that the cases became 'opportunities to study the phenomenon' (Stake, 2005; p.451).

3.5.2. Phenomenology

While the Multiple Case Study approach was a choice of *what* to study, the *how* question was answered by using a phenomenological approach. According to Bryman, 'Phenomenology is a philosophy that is concerned with the question of how individuals make sense of the world around them and how in particular the philosopher should bracket out preconceptions concerning his or her grasp of that world' (2012; p.714). The selection of Phenomenology as a research approach was largely driven by the epistemological position taken for the present research. Acknowledging the importance of understanding (*Verstehen*) the 'lived experiences' of Muslim headteachers (Creswell, 2013; p.76), I used 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology' to gain access to the meanings attributed by Muslim headteachers to their actions and then 'interpret their actions and their social world from their point of view' (Bryman, 2012; p.30). Hermeneutic or Interpretive Phenomenology, developed by philosophers like Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur, advocates 'our embeddedness in the world of language and social relationships, and the inescapable historicity of all understanding' (Finlay, 2012; p.22). By emphasising interpretation as a means of bringing out 'the ways in which meanings occur in a context', this specific type of phenomenology was best suited to answer the research questions of this study for the following reasons:

a) The description of the lived experiences of Muslim headteachers in relation to the social phenomenon needed to be viewed in their respective national as well as school

contexts. The review of literature in the previous chapter suggested that the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers are influenced by the context formed by the interplay of culture (both national as well as school), diversity in the schools, school type as well as socio-cultural factors. The selected Muslim headteachers, therefore, comprised a 'heterogeneous group' (Creswell, 2013; p.78) who had all experienced the phenomenon in different ways and there was a need to interpret these differences according to the headteachers' individual perspectives.

b) The interpretation of the social phenomenon was 'implicated' (Finlay, 2012; p.22); that is as a researcher, my task was to interpret the interpretations of the headteachers, thus leading to 'double interpretation' (Bryman, 2012; p.31)

c) Finally, keeping the phenomenon of interest in mind, my position as an insider to the faith tradition, was crucial in managing the headteachers' interpretation of their religion in a leadership role. In order to focus on the experiences of the Muslim headteachers being studied, it was important that my personal experiences of being a Muslim were 'bracketed out' (Creswell, 2013; p.78). However, there were some advantages as well of having a similar faith *and* ethnic background as the selected headteachers (these will be discussed in detail in *Section 3.5.3*). This called for 'researcher reflexivity' where I had to continuously reflect on my personal interpretation of religion as well as the phenomenon under study in order to 'move beyond the partiality of [our] previous understandings' (Finlay, 2003; p.108).

While the above three reasons justified the use of Hermeneutic Phenomenology as a research approach for this study, I was aware of some of the tensions associated with this methodology.

For example, whether to produce normative or idiographic descriptions of the headteachers' accounts, the extent to which I should involve interpretations in the description and whether to set aside my own subjective understanding of Islamic leadership principles or bring them to foreground (Finlay, 2012).

As a way to overcome these tensions, I defined my stance on 'religion' earlier (see Chapter 2, *Section 2.3.2*) as it helped in bracketing out my own beliefs and biases in order to discover new understandings of the phenomenon. While for me, my moral beliefs and values are grounded in my religion, I *did not* compare the Muslim headteachers' views about religion with my own knowledge and views. Rather, I viewed them as the headteachers experienced them and interpreted them from *their* perspective. Therefore, by selecting Hermeneutic Phenomenology as a methodological choice, I could justify (a) the interpretive stance for this research, (b) the methods for collecting data and (c) the interpretation of the data.

3.5.3. Positioning myself in the research

While undertaking a hermeneutic phenomenological approach for the present study, reflecting on my own position in the research process was critical since it explained the 'researcher reflexivity' described earlier. Since the motivation for this research came from a personal inquisitiveness to observe people with a similar faith background for their perceptions about religion in a position of authority, my engagement in this project was not independent of my own faith background. Even though this motivation does not reflect my own religious context and/or commitment, it is based on a knowledge that is both defined as well as understood by a person who associates him/herself with the same faith tradition. Hence the deep interest I have in my religion, Islam, and which is informed by my study of it, had the potential of being viewed

as problematic since it could lead to the loss of a certain kind of detachment by being considered a 'native' (Arweck, 2002; p.122). However, by describing my stance on religion at the outset, I acknowledge that my own predispositions about and affinities with my own faith *only* helped me in carrying out this investigation as I reported the subjective accounts of the headteachers as *they* perceived them.

The interpretation of the phenomenon under study was not only influenced by my position as an insider to the faith tradition; equally important was my ethnicity since I was comparing Muslim headteachers in two different countries. Owing to the comparative nature of the study, religion as well as ethnicity of the headteachers was of prime concern. While the former was the main selection criteria for headteachers participating in this study, the latter had to be considered to keep the comparators same in both countries. This was also important to make any claims about similarities and differences between the Muslim headteachers selected for this project (Gorard, 2013). However, headteachers selected from England were British Pakistani Muslims since they were second-generation Pakistanis, born and raised in England. This made me an 'outsider' (to some extent) for the Muslim headteachers in England due to which I found it difficult to approach them for participating in this research. Nevertheless, as will be explained later in the section on sampling, I used the similarity between our faith background as a positive aspect to gain access to these headteachers. Thus, throughout the research process, I was conscious about reflecting on my position in the research process both an 'insider' *and* an 'outsider'. The following paragraphs illustrate these two positions in more detail.

The fact that I shared a similar faith background with the headteachers, in both countries, made me an insider to the faith tradition (Islam). Keeping the study of religion in mind, there is wide debate on the role of a researcher, belonging to any faith tradition, as an insider or outsider and

how it influences the study itself. According to Sambur, an understanding of these positions and their clarification thereof, is important for students of religious studies if 'they are to come to grips with the often complex and contested theoretical, definitional, and methodological aspects of religion' (Sambur, 2002; p.27).

As will be explained in later chapters, the 'discourse' used by Muslim headteachers, to express their views, beliefs and experiences of religion was different in some ways and similar in others, between the two countries. The meaning of the word 'discourse' here is borrowed from Stringer's definition where he defines discourse as 'the way of speaking and/or writing, a way of using language that is related to a specific social group or discipline' (Stringer, 2002; p.8). Sharing a similar faith background did not necessitate the use of a similar discourse when it came to the construction of individual accounts by the Muslim headteachers. Thus, the differences in the discourse of religion used by Muslim headteachers in England (MHIE) and Muslim headteachers in Pakistan (MHIP) were largely attributed to the national contexts in which the headteachers were located. It is here that my position, as an insider to the faith *and* ethnic context, helped me understand why the headteachers' perceptions about religion and its expression varied between the two countries.

While trying to understand the differences in the Muslim headteachers' articulation of religion, I tried to listen to the experiences of the headteachers as objectively as possible and attempted to report them in the same way. The differences in the expression will be explained in later chapters (see Chapters 4 and 5), but at this point, I want to state that my reporting of the headteachers' accounts was not based on any kind of subjectivity associated with my faith background; I was not in a position to judge these accounts as being right or wrong. From a social constructivist perspective, the Muslim headteachers were social beings whose understanding of the link

between their religion and profession was based on their relationship with others as well as with their respective contexts (both institutional as well as national).

3.6. SAMPLING

I used 'purposive' sampling as it matched the objective of my research and allowed me to answer the questions formed for this study. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling which aims to select 'cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed' (Bryman, 2012; p.418). Under the umbrella of purposive sampling, I used 'criterion sampling' (Patton, 1990) since the selected headteachers had to match a particular criterion. That is, being 'Muslims' was the first and foremost criteria that headteachers had to fulfil to be included in the sample. Considering that my research was a comparative research between England and Pakistan, the second criteria that the selected headteachers had to fulfil was to be of a Pakistani origin. Owing to the cross-national nature of this study, the implication of 'criterion sampling' was quite different in the two countries. Therefore, I will explain the process of sampling (for headteachers *and* teachers and pupils) for the two countries separately.

3.6.1. Headteachers

England: The use of purposive sampling for selecting the participants for this study was based on the focus of this research, i.e. how Muslim headteachers perceived their leadership actions and the underlying principles in light of their religion. The selected headteachers, as stated above, had to be Muslims of a Pakistani origin. The fact that they subscribed to the Islamic faith was a sufficient criterion for them to be included in the sample. Whether they practised elements of

their faith was not important for my research study. Therefore, questions regarding the headteachers' religion focused on investigating how they perceived religion in a professional role only. However, it can be argued that the fact that the depth of the selected headteachers' faith was not a selection criteria, could have influenced the extent to which the headteachers regarded (or not regarded) their faith important in a leadership role. Nevertheless, I was not in a position to relate the variations in the headteachers' responses with the depth of their faith, as that was not the criteria for their selection. The extent to which these headteachers perceived their religion and experienced it in a professional role was influenced by multiple contextual factors, which will be discussed in detail in later chapters.

Finding Muslim headteachers (of a Pakistani origin) was a challenging task since Muslims are a minority and not many Muslims are working at higher levels in state schools. The first step, therefore, in selecting these headteachers was to find where they were working. After an initial search, I realised that there was no official database for Muslim headteachers leading state schools in England. For this reason, I contacted a representative of Muslim Teachers Association (MTA) as well as emailed those schools (names were taken from the Local Authority school directories, published online) whose headteachers had a Pakistani Muslim name. Initially, I sent introductory emails to about 10-12 Muslim headteachers (of a Pakistani origin) seeking their willingness to participate. Only five of them responded. Owing to the time constraint for completing this project, I considered these five headteachers, who were self-selected, as my sample from England. The self-selected characteristics of the headteachers made the purposive/criterion sampling slightly atypical in my study.

Since the selection of headteachers, rather than the school, was of prime concern for this study, the selected headteachers represented different types of state schools. In this regard, I did not

have much choice in choosing a school in a particular area. Thus, while giving importance to the selection of the cases (Muslim headteachers), the selection/sampling of the contexts (Bryman, 2012; p.417) became secondary. Nevertheless, when analysing the responses of the five headteachers, all levels of context (personal, institutional and national) were carefully considered. In terms of geographical location, three Muslim headteachers were leading state schools in the West Midlands, one in West London and one is North-East London. Of the five headteachers, three were males and two were females.

Once the headteachers confirmed their participation in my research, I visited them personally to introduce myself and my research. Although a formal introduction was made in the emails sent to these headteachers (see Appendix B), visiting each headteacher personally was important considering the ongoing investigations about the Trojan Horse Controversy (THC) at the time when I started my fieldwork (March, 2014). Keeping my position in the context of English schools in mind, these visits proved helpful as I managed to negotiate a commitment from the headteachers for participating in my research. This was particularly important as one of the five headteachers refused to continue his support, for undisclosed reasons, even though he had committed earlier.

Pakistan: Selecting Muslim headteachers in Pakistan was not the same as in England since Pakistan is a Muslim-majority country. Although the purpose of the research, described earlier, was of prime importance, I used 'convenience sampling' along with 'criterion sampling' when selecting Muslim headteachers in Pakistan. The rationale behind using convenience sampling was to select headteachers whom I could easily access and interview in the limited time I was in Pakistan. Thus, I confined the selection of the multiple cases (Muslim headteachers) to Lahore city 'by virtue of its accessibility' (Bryman, 2012; p.201). Moreover, it was my first experience

working with state schools in Pakistan, hence without a 'gatekeeper', I could not easily access the headteachers.

The role of the gatekeeper was important for different reasons. Unlike England, where it was the headteachers' discretion whether to participate in my research or not, in Pakistan, I had to inform a District Education Officer (DEO) who would then accompany me to a government school within his area and introduce me to the headteachers. Finding and accessing a DEO was not possible without the gatekeeper. Thus, the gatekeeper (an Assistant Professor working in the Division of Education at a teacher education university in Lahore, Pakistan) mediated access to a DEO who helped in the selection of two headteachers. The remaining three headteachers were recommended by the 'gatekeeper' himself owing to his experience of working in government schools.

While the selection criteria for headteachers in Pakistan was similar to the headteachers in England, (their subscription to the Islamic faith), the convenience sampling strategy used for Muslim headteachers in Pakistan had slightly different implications. Since the headteachers were not in a position to deny the gatekeeper's request for participating in my research, it can be argued that their involuntary participation could have influenced the nature of their responses. From the five headteachers, there was only one (female) headteacher, who was not very willing to be interviewed and this was reflected in her responses which were not as detailed as the others. However, due to time constraints, I could not find an alternative headteacher. Apart from that, the remaining four headteachers were quite enthusiastic to participate in this research and their responses were as articulate as their counterparts in England. Therefore, one implication of accessing the headteachers through a gatekeeper was that they were obliged to answer the questions. Nonetheless, this was an implication of the selection process, which did

not seem to influence the actual responses of the headteachers about the perception and experience of their faith in a leadership role.

One of the problems associated with convenience sampling is the difficulty in generalising the findings since only those cases are selected which are available to the researcher (Bryman, 2012; p.201). In my case, this problem was not of much concern as I did not intend to generalise the findings. Since the size of my sample was small in both countries, the issue of representation was resolved by selecting the Muslim headteachers from schools which were as geographically dispersed as possible. Lahore city is divided into two administrative divisions: (a) Cantt division and (b) Lahore city division. Two of the selected headteachers were from the Cantt division while three were from the Lahore city division.

In addition to using convenience sampling, the selected headteachers also had to match the sample in England. Therefore, apart from the criteria mentioned for the headteachers in England, there were some additional criteria which I looked for in the MHIP. For example, I aimed to:

a) select two female headteachers and three male headteachers,

b) select the above-mentioned headteachers from elementary/middle and secondary state schools to match the primary and secondary schools in England.

The consideration of the above criteria for selecting the Muslim headteachers in Pakistan was important since the research was a cross-national comparison between England and Pakistan and I had to be careful in keeping the comparators same (Gorard, 2013).

3.6.2. Teachers and pupils

Teachers in England and Pakistan: The selection of teachers and pupils for the focus groups was done by the headteachers themselves, in both countries, based on their availability at the scheduled time. A total of 38 focus groups were conducted in both countries (a detailed breakdown of the focus groups, along with their composition is given in Appendix M)

In the case of England, I informed the headteachers about the focus group interviews at the time of introduction. Nearer to the time, I sent a detailed email to the headteachers outlining the duration of the focus group interviews, the composition of the focus groups and in some cases, the interview guide for the focus groups. In terms of the criteria for selection, teachers in the two focus groups were to be divided on the basis of their responsibilities. While one group constituted class teachers only (from different year groups depending on the type of school), the other group constituted class teachers with an additional responsibility. This way, I tried to ensure that there was homogeneity within each group such that the participants were comfortable to share their experiences in a group without being influenced or over-powered by others. However, despite the homogeneity, there was sufficient variation amongst group members, which sometimes led to 'contrasting opinions' (Krueger and Casey, 2000; p.71). This variation was attributed to the individual experiences and perspectives of the teachers and was not linked to their religious and ethnic backgrounds which were admittedly different across the selected schools. The ethnic and religious diversity of the teacher focus groups mirrored the diversity which characterised the schools and was a matter of chance rather than a deliberate strategy. Nevertheless, such a diversity did not influence the way teachers experienced and perceived the role of religion in their respective headteachers' leadership.

As for selection, in most schools, the headteachers delegated the selection task to a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) who would send an email request to the teachers asking for a convenient time to be interviewed. I had planned to conduct two focus group interviews with teachers and for each group, I aimed to interview about 5-7 participants. However, this number varied in each school as I faced different challenges while conducting focus groups with teachers. For example, owing to the difficulty in taking time out from their teaching schedules, the exact number of teachers was not present in most cases. Additionally, sometimes teachers left during a focus group discussion due to prior commitments. In one of the five schools, there was only one teacher who was available to be interviewed at the time I went to conduct a focus group. In another school, all participating teachers were Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT). These teachers had little or no experience of their headteachers' principles since it is standard practice in schools in England that a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is made responsible for the NQTs rather than the headteacher dealing with their problems. Therefore, their responses reflected a lack of awareness about the headteacher's principles. In light of these challenges, sometimes I had to compromise on the number of participants while at other times, I had to compromise on the duration of the focus groups (which was originally set for 45 minutes). Consequently, the teachers' accounts were not as rich and detailed as the pupils. Nevertheless, I ensured that all questions in the interview guide were answered despite the time and accessibility constraints.

In Pakistan, the selection of teachers for focus group interviews was done by the headteachers alone. Although the selection criteria were the same, i.e. one group comprised class teachers only and the other group comprised class teachers who had an additional responsibility, there was no diversity among the teachers selected for the focus group interviews. All the participating teachers were Muslims; therefore, there were a lot of similarities between the teachers' and the

headteachers' perception of religion. These similarities will be discussed in detail in the findings and analysis chapters. Moreover, conducting teacher focus group interviews in Pakistan was relatively easier. This is because, once the headteachers confirmed their participation in my research, it was their responsibility to ensure that the focus group interviews took place. The teachers participating in the focus groups could not refuse the headteachers owing to the bureaucratic culture in Pakistani schools. Therefore, regardless of what time of the day the headteachers "instructed" the teachers to leave their classes for the interview, they had no choice but to comply.

Since the personal choice of the teachers to participate in the focus group interviews was not considered at all, this sometimes resulted in their unhappiness, which they expressed in the form of criticising the top-down bureaucratic system in state schools. As will be explained later in the analysis chapter, the teachers regarded both themselves and their respective headteachers as "servants" who had no choice but to comply with the directives of the higher authorities. However, apart from feeling restrained by the bureaucracy of the education system, the teachers were open in expressing their views about how they experienced their headteachers' religion in a professional role.

Pupils in England and Pakistan: The pupils/students for each focus group were selected by their headteachers based on their age/year group in both countries. In primary schools, one group of pupils was taken from Year 5 and the other from Year 6. In secondary and all-through schools, one group comprised pupils from Years 8 and 9 while the other comprised pupils from Years 10 and 11. Each pupil focus group had 5-7 participants. The criterion for selecting the pupils in both countries was their articulation in terms of understanding of, and responding to the interview questions. By selecting 'natural groups' (Bryman, 2012; p.510), in which pupils

knew each other, the discussion went on smoothly and naturally as pupils felt confident to agree/disagree with one another on different aspects. While I tried to maintain uniformity in the selection criteria, the composition of focus groups in both countries was significantly different.

In England, owing to the ethnic and religious diversity in the selected schools, the focus groups comprised pupils from varied religious and ethnic backgrounds. Although majority of the selected schools had a large population of Muslim pupils, I asked the headteachers to form groups that clearly reflected the diversity in the schools. In Pakistan, however, the focus groups were largely homogenous. With the exception of one or two groups in schools where there was a relatively larger number of Christian students, all the other groups comprised Muslim students only. As with teacher focus groups, the composition of pupil focus groups in both countries was constrained by the individual context of the selected schools. While the focus groups in the English schools reflected the diversity within these schools, the focus groups in Pakistani schools mirrored the lack of ethnic and religious diversity within the selected schools. Nevertheless, the focus group interviews in both countries did not suggest that such contextual constraints influenced the participants' responses.

3.7. RESEARCH METHODS

The research methods employed for the present study include:

a) Semi-structured interviews (with headteachers)

b) Focus group interviews (with teachers and pupils)

c) Documentary data

3.7.1. Semi-structured interviews

Following an interpretive phenomenological approach, my research aimed to explore and understand the perceptions of Muslim headteachers about their leadership actions and the underlying principles in light of their religion. With this aim in mind, qualitative interviews with the headteachers were the most suitable method of collecting rich and detailed information about their individual 'experiences and perspectives' (Braun and Clarke, 2013; p.80). By using semi-structured interviews with the Muslim headteachers, I was able to be more flexible and responsive to the dynamics of the discussion, thus gaining additional insights into what the headteachers considered important (Bryman, 2012; p.470).

Although I had prepared a list of questions prior to conducting the interviews (the interview guide), I was flexible in using the list such that I could adjust the questions to respond to anything significant being raised by the headteachers during the interview. Owing to the cross-national comparative nature of the study, conducting semi-structured interviews with headteachers was time consuming in terms of their organisation, execution and transcription. However, the sensitivity of the phenomenon (religion) under study called for a one-to-one interaction with the headteachers to get them talk about it. Additionally, by selecting a smaller sample of Muslim headteachers (five from each country) and interviewing them twice, I tried to overcome these difficulties in the best possible way (Braun and Clarke, 2013; p.80).

The choice of conducting semi-structured interviews with the selected headteachers was also appropriate for the following reasons:

a) Interviews in Pakistan were bi-lingual; this means that in some cases, I had to use both English and Urdu languages to phrase the question for better understanding of the headteachers. Therefore, the precise wording of the questions would sometimes be changed to retain the actual meaning.

b) In some cases, headteachers would answer a question earlier, which was otherwise set later in the interview guide; thus, making that particular question redundant.

c) Finally, there were times when something would come up unexpectedly in the headteachers' responses which could not be ignored and hence a follow-up question would be asked at that point.

3.7.2. Focus group interviews

A focus group is 'a method of interviewing that involves more than one, usually at least four, interviewees' (Bryman, 2012; p.501). The primary objective of conducting focus group interviews was to obtain multiple perspectives of teachers and pupils in the selected schools in both countries. By forming somewhat homogenous groups (of teachers and pupils), I was interested in finding out how teachers and pupils experienced the leadership actions of their respective headteachers *and* their religion and how they constructed *and* expressed their understanding in a group. Moreover, owing to the comparative nature of the study, I was constrained on time. Interviewing teachers and pupils in groups gave me an opportunity to listen to more perspectives at the same time. Although Bryman (2012) considers this rationale a feature of 'group interview' rather than 'focus group interview', I decided to consider them as focus groups since I was interested both 'in the content of the discussion ('what' is said) and also in 'how' the subject is

discussed' (Matthews and Ross, 2010; p.236). Of the various disadvantages associated with conducting focus groups, the most relevant issue in this study was arranging the focus groups, particularly the teacher focus groups. Owing to 'logistical challenges' (Braun and Clarke, 2013; p.113) involved, I compromised on the structure and timings of the focus groups in order to gather sufficient data pertinent to the research focus.

3.7.3. Documents

Some of the documents selected and reviewed in the present study, and the data sets generated from these documents are listed below:

a) **Ofsted reports of the selected schools in England:** There were some sections of these reports that I was particularly interested in. For example, 'Information about the school' as it defined the context of the school in terms of its ethnic composition, number of pupils on Pupil Premium, pupil intake and any achievement of the school. In addition to this, the section, 'The leadership and management' provided insights into the evaluative perspectives about the school's leaders, including the headteacher, on how the school was managed and how staff, pupils, parents and community were dealt with.

b) **Ofsted School Data Dashboard of the selected schools in England:** The Data Dashboard provides a summary of the school's result data over a three-year period as well as comparisons to other schools or providers (http://dashboard.ofsted.gov.uk). Rather than looking at the school performance (as it was not the focus of my research), I studied the section on 'School context', only, from the respective Data Dashboards to gain insight into the contextual data about the selected schools such as number of pupils

in the school and percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM). This contextual information complemented the information obtained from the Ofsted reports in terms of comparing the selected schools with the national average.

c) **Some policy documents of the selected schools, in England, such as 'Pupil Premium' policy, 'Behaviour and Discipline' policy, 'Inclusion' policy and 'Equality' policy:** The language of these documents was compared with the headteachers' articulation and implementation of leadership principles. Additionally, they provided insight into the statutory guidance on the aspects of behaviour, inclusion and equality.

d) **Official school websites of the selected schools in England:** I used the official websites to have a better understanding of the schools in which the Muslim headteachers worked, their ethos and their values. The above-mentioned policy documents were also taken from the school websites.

e) In the case of Pakistan, I used the School Education Department (SED), Government of the Punjab website (http://schools.punjab.gov.pk) to obtain contextual information about the selected schools. The section on 'Rules and Regulations' provided insight into the 'governing laws' and 'policies/rules' applicable to state schools in the province of Punjab. In particular, I studied the School Manual (*Dastoor ul Amal*), which outlined the details of curricular and co-curricular activities, method of teaching and administrative procedures for Elementary, Secondary and Higher Secondary schools in Punjab.

> Once again, the language of this and other similar documents was compared with how the headteachers described their leadership principles, particularly those which they derived from statutory guidance. The section of 'Schools' in the official website provided some contextual details of the schools in which the selected Muslim headteachers worked. These contextual details were quite different from the details of schools in England. Since they focused more on the structural information about the selected schools (such as basic facilities, sports facilities, academic facilities, teaching staff, etc.), I made limited use of this section, for example, to know about the number of pupils, geographical location and teaching staff of the selected schools.

Looking at the types of documents I referred to in the present study and the data sets generated, it is clear that such documents were not 'produced specifically for the purpose of [this] research. Instead, they were out there, waiting to be assembled and analysed' based on their relevance to my research (Bryman, 2012; p.543).

3.8. DESIGNING RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The use of qualitative interviews as the main source of data collection required careful designing of the interview guide to encourage the selected Muslim headteachers to provide in-depth and detailed responses to questions relevant to the research topic. In this section, I will explain the reasons for interviewing the Muslim headteachers in two phases, in England and Pakistan, and describe the content of the two interview guides in detail. This explanation will also include the rationale for designing separate interview guides (for second-phase interviews) for Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan. In addition to this, I will also describe how I designed the focus group interview guides for teachers and pupils in both countries.

3.8.1. Semi-structured interviews with headteachers

First-phase interview guide: Considering the sensitivity associated with probing about religion, I conducted two interviews with the headteachers in both countries. Although as part of the research protocol, the selected headteachers were aware that religion (and ethnicity) was the main criteria for their inclusion in this project, they were still strangers to me. Thus, building rapport and putting them at ease was a priority (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.88). It is for this reason that the first phase interviews were aimed towards understanding the leadership of Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan. An interview guide (See Appendix E) was designed for conducting semi-structured interviews with the ten Muslim headteachers which was largely informed by literature and the research questions set for this project. The first-phase interview guide comprised three main sections:

i. Guidance

ii. Principles

iii. Contextual factors

While the first two sections answered research questions 1 and 2, the third section explored the contextual factors identified in the review of literature. There were some questions in the first phase interview guide which were phrased slightly differently for Muslim headteachers in both countries (See Appendix E). This decision was made after piloting an initial interview guide with some headteachers in both countries (see *Section 3.9*). For example:

a) A vision/mission statement in Pakistani schools was not recognised well by headteachers in Pakistan. Therefore, rather than stating the vision/mission statement (as was done for headteachers in England), I explored the understanding of the MHIP by asking them to describe what it was.

b) For schools in England the term 'daily acts of collective worship' was used more commonly to refer to 'assemblies'. In Pakistan, however, the term 'morning assemblies' was used since an assembly in Pakistani schools is always conducted in the morning.

c) Regarding religious and ethnic diversity, schools in Pakistan did not have much diversity as compared to schools in England. The only other religious group in the selected schools was that of Christians. Therefore, sometimes I would use the word Christians when referring to religious minorities. Unlike schools in England, there was no evidence of any ethnic minorities in the selected schools in Pakistan. The only diversity which was observed in these schools, and mentioned by the headteachers, was the *Shia-Sunni* diversity. Thus, in schools where this kind of diversity was more pronounced, I would additionally probe the headteachers about its impact on their leadership.

Second-phase interview guide: The second-phase interview guide was designed after conducting a preliminary analysis of the first-phase interviews with the ten headteachers. While the headteachers were given the opportunity to reflect on their leadership practices in the first-phase interviews, in the second phase, they were asked to relate their leadership actions to their own faith, Islam. This 'simultaneous collection and analysis of data was a reflective activity' (Day, Harris and Hadfield, 2001, p.23) which enabled me to understand both their leadership actions

and their perception about the place of religion in a leadership role. The purpose of the initial analysis of first-phase interviews with Muslim headteachers was to gain insight into:

a) the headteachers' own understanding of their professional roles (their actions and their experiences) and

b) how this understanding related to their own religion

Keeping the above purpose in mind, I drew three analytical categories from the headteachers' first-phase responses and loosely arranged them under three sections:

a. *Leadership actions* (manifested through the ethos, relations and practices within the selected schools)

b. *Principles* (underlying moral rules or beliefs that helped the headteachers to know what is right and wrong and which influenced their actions)

c. *Guidance* (advice or instructions from a variety of sources like secular or religious)

By forming the above three categories, I was able to see how the headteachers' understanding of their professional roles and their own religion was related to the principles and guidance they used in their leadership roles. Having established that link, my objective for the second-phase interviews was to explore in depth the place of religion in a professional role. However, this exploration was different for the selected headteachers in England and Pakistan. Unlike, the first-phase interviews, the interview guides for the second-phase interviews were separate for each set of headteachers (See Appendices F and G). In the table below, I will explain the

rationale for using different questions for MHIE and MHIP. Additionally, there were some questions which were similar for both sets of headteachers; I will also describe the reasons for doing so.

Table 1 - Rationale for using different second-phase interview guides for Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan

Interview questions which were different for Muslim headteachers in England	
Question	Rationale
Q.5; Q.6; Q.9	To understand the personal experiences of Muslim headteachers as they were growing up in England
Q.7	To consider the differences in the religious orientation and expression of Muslim headteachers
Q.10	To understand how an event, as part of context, can influence the perception and articulation of religion for Muslim headteachers
Interview questions which were different for Muslim headteachers in Pakistan	
Question	Rationale
Q.2	To gain an objective understanding of the deep intertwining between religion and profession in Pakistan, and explore how 'personal religiosity' of Muslim headteachers is affected by (or vice versa) the intertwining
Q.3	To untangle components of religious guidance from statutory guidance, especially when Muslim headteachers in Pakistan take religion as 'given'

Interview questions which were similar for Muslim headteachers in both countries		
Question		Rationale
Appendix F	Appendix G	
Q.1; Q.2	Q.1; Q.4	To understand the sources to which Muslim headteachers associate their leadership principles to and explore whether there is a link between Islam and leadership principles of the selected Muslim headteachers
Q.3; Q.4	Q.5; Q.6	To explore if the selected Muslim headteachers have ever faced a conflict between their religion and profession
Q.8	Q.7	To understand how, and to what extent, the personal religiosity of Muslim headteachers is influenced by the religious profile in the respective countries (Islam being the State religion in Pakistan and Islam being a minority religion in England)

The above table shows that the second-phase interviews were more focused on the Muslim headteachers' own faith and how they perceived/used their association with Islam in a professional role. Considering the importance of context in this research, several factors highlighted in the first-phase interviews, and probed further in the second phase, implied that being a Muslim headteacher in England was quite different from being a Muslim headteacher in Pakistan. By designing context-specific questions about the headteachers' religion and profession, I was able to explore the selected headteachers' understanding of the social phenomenon in a more grounded context.

3.8.2. Focus group interview guide for teachers

The purpose of interviewing teachers from the selected schools was to understand how MHIE and MHIP enacted their roles and then set these accounts 'against the views of significant others' (Ribbins and Gronn, 2000; p.42). The interview guide for teachers (See Appendix H) was designed with the following objectives in mind:

a) In terms of the underlying principles, I was interested to find out the teachers' perception about any principles that the respective headteachers held and which the teachers then applied in their own teaching (and leadership) roles. This gave me the opportunity to check whether there was a route through the respective Muslim headteachers' principles that passed down through the teachers to the classroom and pupil level (Q.1; Q.4; Q.6 in Appendix H).

b) To find out how teachers perceived their headteachers' religion in a leadership role. By asking teachers questions about their headteachers' faith (Q.2 and Q.3 in Appendix H), I was able to compare and contrast the headteachers' perceptions and experiences of their own religion with those of the teachers.

c) Question 4 in the interview guide was phrased differently for teachers in both countries. While teachers in England were asked whether the mission/vision statement reflected their headteachers' principles, teachers in Pakistan were probed about any underlying principles of their respective headteachers in the designing of the visual displays around the schools, which were predominantly Islamic in nature.

3.8.3. Focus group interview guide for pupils

The principle behind conducting focus group interviews with pupils was the same as teachers; to obtain multiple perspectives about the selected headteachers' leadership actions, the principles that underpinned these actions and how religion influenced the Muslim headteachers in a leadership role. By conducting the focus groups in a relatively unstructured way, I gave the pupils an opportunity to talk about their shared experiences of the headteachers' leadership. Some of the key objectives I aimed to fulfil while designing the interview guide for pupils (See Appendix I) are as follows:

a) By asking broad questions about pupils' experiences of their respective schools (Q.1; Q.2; Q.3; Q.5; Q.6 in Appendix I) and then narrowing them down to the role of their headteachers, I was interested to know if the pupils thought of their respective headteachers in the particular contexts presented in these questions.

b) The question about the headteachers' religion (Q.4 in Appendix I) aimed to find out (i) if the headteachers' religion was important for the pupils, (ii) how they perceived the religion of their respective headteachers, and (iii) whether the fact that their headteachers were Muslims made any difference to the running of the school.

c) Similar to teacher focus group interviews, the question about school motto (for pupils in England) was replaced by visual displays for pupils in Pakistan. This is because a school vision/mission statement in Pakistan was not clearly understood by teachers and pupils alike. The visual displays, instead, were a salient feature of the Pakistani state schools;

hence teachers and pupils could relate to it better and articulate the headteachers' role in designing them.

3.8.4. Bilingual interviews

The use of bilingual interviews with headteachers, teachers and students in Pakistan was a reflective process. Following an interpretive tradition, my awareness of and attention to the context of state/government schools in Pakistan allowed me to be flexible about the mode of interviewing in terms of language. This form of reflection represented 'an effort to reduce the reliance on pure data in research and to increase the use of reason' (Willis, 2007; p.205). Additionally, the interpretive nature of this research called for 'more participation in the context of the research' (Willis, 2007; p.206). Therefore, while reflecting and reasoning how to increase my participation in this research, I decided to be flexible in switching between Urdu and English when asking questions from the selected participants, even though the questions were mostly asked in English. Apart from following the principles of qualitative research in terms of reflection and reason, there were some additional factors based on which I conducted bilingual interviews with headteachers, teachers and students in Pakistan. These are:

a) Since all five Muslim headteachers were strangers to me, I was advised by the 'gatekeeper' to use a language that *the headteachers* were comfortable with in expressing their views and perceptions. Therefore, as part of building rapport with the headteachers during the fieldwork, I did not stop them from speaking in Urdu at any point in the interviews. The same principle applied when interviewing teachers in focus groups. Although there was a lot of English spoken during the interviews, participants were more comfortable in answering the questions in Urdu rather than in English (Halai, 2007;

p.346). Therefore, I frequently switched between English and Urdu when conversing with the headteachers and teachers.

b) The case with students was somewhat different. Coming from low socio-economic backgrounds, most of the students spoke Punjabi, rather than Urdu, as a lingua franca at home. This made it difficult for them to understand and speak English in school. Remaining sensitive to the inability of students to converse in English, I only used English language for the key terms as there are a lot of English words which 'have been absorbed in the Urdu language and are used commonly in everyday conversations' (Halai, 2007; p.346). The students did not have a problem in understanding the key words; thus, the overall focus group discussion was conducted as a mix of Urdu and English languages.

3.9. PILOTING

Once the research instruments were designed, I piloted the first-phase interview guide with five Muslim headteachers in Lahore, Pakistan and two Muslim headteachers in London. The five headteachers in Pakistan had been working in their respective schools for varying lengths of time, ranging from 7-17 years. Three of them were females and two were males. Unlike Pakistan, finding Muslim headteachers of a Pakistani origin in England was very difficult. In order not to exhaust the self-selected five headteachers who had confirmed their participation in my research, I interviewed two Muslim females; one was an ex-headteacher for an all girls' school (11-16 years) in East London (she remained a headteacher for 20 years); the other one was a deputy headteacher (she remained in her position for 12 years). While the latter was suggested by my

supervisor, the former was recommended by the deputy headteacher herself. Owing to the time constraints, these interviews were conducted via FaceTime.

The objective of piloting was to ensure that the research instruments functioned well in both contexts (Bryman, 2012; p.263). Pre-testing the first-phase interview guide in both countries helped me identify those questions which were not understood well by the headteachers, either because of their wording or their 'confusing positioning' in the interview guide (Bryman, 2012; p.263). The process of piloting in the present research led to important lessons, both in terms of content and process. For example, in Pakistan, the question about school culture was not answered well, therefore in the final interview guide, I added probes to facilitate the headteachers in describing the school culture. Also, the question about school vision/mission statement had to be re-phrased as all selected state schools, unlike schools in England, followed the same vision, which was set by the School Education Department (SED), Government of the Punjab. Several headteachers in the pilot study were not even aware of this vision. Therefore, for the final interviews, I replaced the word 'your' with 'the' in Q.6 to phrase it like 'Can you please describe *the* vision for this school?' By doing so, the headteachers had the opportunity to reflect on the vision set by the government and then relate it to their own vision, if any.

In the case of England, the question about visual displays (Q.11) was not as significant as it was in the case of Pakistan. This was because the visual displays in Pakistani state schools contained a lot of Islamic content, which was in most cases decided by the respective headteachers. However, in English schools, the Muslim headteachers only overlooked the design and content of the visual displays as they delegated the task to other members of staff. Nevertheless, I included the question in the final interview guide for the sake of comparison.

In terms of process, I was referred to the headteachers for the pilot study in Lahore by the 'gatekeeper'. In most cases, he would call a headteacher and set an appointment at an hour's notice. On reflection, this probably affected the results: headteachers are extremely busy people and they may have felt pressured to be interviewed at such a short notice, which ultimately could have affected the quality of their responses. Thus, for the final interviewing, I decided to address these challenges in a more sensitive way. I visited the selected headteachers, while I was in Lahore, and scheduled an appointment for both first and second-phase interviews at least 2-3 months in advance.

In the case of England, my experience with the pilot interviews was quite different. The most noteworthy aspect to reflect on was the Muslim headteachers' apprehension about the THC. Although I did not intend to investigate this controversy, the two female Muslim headteachers mentioned it during the pilot interviews as an important event that was quite relevant at the time I had scheduled my interviews. Therefore, I decided to add an optional question about THC in the second-phase interview guide and pre-informed all five Muslim headteachers in an email that it was their personal choice to answer the question.

3.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Since there were multiple participants involved in the present study (Muslim headteachers, teachers and students), the main ethical issues relevant to the study were gaining access to these participants and their protection. Before starting the pilot interviews, I gained ethical approval from the Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick. I followed the guidelines presented in the BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011) as well as the department's Guidance for the Ethical Conduct of Research. Considering each of the following

areas as an ethic of respect, equally applicable to research participants in England and Pakistan, I will explain in the following paragraphs how I adhered to these guidelines in two different contexts.

Voluntary informed consent: A voluntary informed consent is 'a condition in which participants understand and agree to their participation without any duress, prior to the research getting' underway (BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, 2011, p.5). As mentioned earlier, the MHIE were self-selected. Although I sent introductory emails to about 10-15 Muslim headteachers of a Pakistani origin, only five agreed to participate in my research. Once confirmed, I ensured that all of them understood the entire process of the research in terms of the two-phased interviews and focus group interviews with teachers and pupils. A tentative timeline was also shared with the selected MHIE. In the introductory meeting with the headteachers, I had the consent forms signed by them. Along with the informed consent, I assured the selected headteachers of the flexibility in the interview schedule as a sign of sensitivity towards their busy schedules. Since focus group interviews had to be scheduled according to the availability of teachers and pupils, I gave a copy of the consent forms (for teachers and pupils) to the headteachers, during the first-phase interviews, for them to share with the concerned person/s who was responsible for arranging the focus groups.

According to the BERA guidelines, 'educational research undertaken … outside of the UK must adhere to the same ethical standards as research in the UK' (2011, p.5). In Pakistan, I accessed the five Muslim headteachers through the 'gatekeeper' and the local DEO. Therefore, at the time of introducing my research, I presented the consent forms to these two people. Later, when I visited the selected MHIP in their respective schools, I had the consent forms signed by them. Additionally, I gave a copy each of the consent forms for focus group interviews (with teachers

and students) to the headteachers. It is important to note that although I followed the same ethical guidelines as in the English schools, the headteachers did not feel the need to have the consent forms signed by either the teachers or students. It was only important for the headteacher of the school to be willing and aware of the research; coordinating and forming focus groups was at the discretion of the headteachers and teachers and students had no choice but to participate.

Children and vulnerable young people: The involvement of pupils (Years 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11) in the present study called for complying with Articles 3 and 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (BERA, 2011, p.6). While Article 3 requires that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration, Article 12 requires that children who are capable of forming their own views should be granted the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, commensurate with their age and maturity (BERA, 2011, p.6). To facilitate the pupils (in England) to give fully informed consent to participate in this research, the consent forms for pupil focus groups were sent home by the concerned teachers or members of staff for their parents to be informed about the research as well. The selected pupils would bring the signed consent forms with them at the time of the focus group interviews. Moreover, I had a Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check conducted prior to the interviews. Such protocols concerning access and interviewing of pupils were not replicated in Pakistan even though I gave the consent forms for pupil focus groups to the selected Muslim headteachers and explained to them their significance.

Privacy and right to withdraw: The participants' (Muslim headteachers, teachers and pupils) right to privacy (in both countries) was exercised by giving them the opportunity to either withdraw from the research, or refrain from answering any question/s they were not

comfortable to answer. Confidentiality was exercised and guaranteed by giving pseudo names to the selected participants. When reporting the findings, the same pseudo names were used for each participant (see Appendix K). At the time of introduction, the selected Muslim headteachers were informed that they had the right to view their transcripts to check the authenticity of their responses. However, only two headteachers in both countries wanted to see their interview transcripts. All ten headteachers were particularly keen to have a report of the findings and analysis, once completed. I informed all ten headteachers that the data collected through the interviews would be used for the completion of this PhD research and will be disseminated (during and after the PhD is completed) for academic conferences and journal publications. The interview records of all participants were kept safe in a secure place (locker provided by the department). Only my supervisors and I could access these records.

3.11. DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

The importance of contextual understanding in qualitative research is crucial in understanding the social behaviour of the research participants (Bryman, 2012; Willis, 2007). Such an understanding of context becomes even more important in a comparative research where a particular aspect, issue or phenomenon within the selected countries or cultures is compared on the basis of some common criteria (Matthews and Ross, 2010, p.131). The data collection process for the present study involved:

a) Semi-structured interviews with Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan,

b) Focus group interviews with teachers and

c) Focus group interviews with pupils

Considering the cross-national comparative nature of the present study, one of the main reasons for interviewing the selected Muslim headteachers in two phases was to allow events and patterns unfold over time (Bryman, 2012, p.402). This kind of interviewing injected 'a sense of process' in the research as the headteachers had the opportunity to reflect on their responses while preparing themselves for the second-phase interviews. Also known as 'retrospective interviewing', the two-phase interviews enabled the selected Muslim headteachers to reflect, in particular, on various aspects of their religion to understand how religion influenced their leadership actions (Bryman, 2012, pp. 402-403). Moreover, the two-phase interviews led to 'thick description', a term proposed by Geertz (1973) to refer to the detailed accounts of social settings, events or individuals.

The timings of the interviews (with the Muslim headteachers, teachers and pupils) were decided through mutual consultation with the selected headteachers in both countries. While I had more flexibility in conducting interviews in England, I was constrained on time in Pakistan. Since the time I spent for fieldwork in Pakistan was usually limited to 8-10 days per visit, I had to schedule the interviews very carefully. Prior to my visit, I would call each headteacher and allocate one full day to each school. This was not the case in England, where I would travel to a particular school (in Birmingham or London) to conduct even one interview. For this reason, my fieldwork plan for schools in England differed significantly than schools in Pakistan. The following two figures explain in detail the process of data collection in England and Pakistan.

Table 2 - Fieldwork plan for schools in England

Phase I
Conduct the first round of semi-structured interviews with headteachers
Transcribe and analyse the interview responses of the headteachers (in both countries) to design (a) the focus group interviews with staff and pupils and (b) the second-phase interviews with headteachers.
The focus groups with staff and pupils were conducted according to the availability of the participants. Owing to this factor, some focus group interviews with teachers continued even after all the headteachers were interviewed.
Phase 2
Conduct the second round of semi-structured interviews with headteachers

Table 3 - Fieldwork plan for schools in Pakistan

Phase 1
Conduct the first round of semi-structured interviews with headteachers
Transcribe and analyse the interview responses of the headteachers (in both countries) to design (a) the focus group interviews with staff and pupils and (b) the second-phase interviews with headteachers.
Pupil focus group interviews, in Pakistan, were coupled with headteachers' first-phase interviews while teacher focus group interviews were coupled with headteachers' second-phase interviews.
Phase 2
Conduct the second round of semi-structured interviews with headteachers

The data collection process, explained in the above tables, was completed in nine months. During this entire period, I communicated with the selected Muslim headteachers, in both countries, regularly to ensure that there were no interruptions in the data collection.

3.12. DATA ANALYSIS

Owing to the qualitative and comparative nature of the present study, the data generated in both countries was extensive. In total, I conducted 58 interviews in England and Pakistan (see Appendix L). I would use Miles' term of 'attractive nuisance' for the large volume of data I

collected through interview transcripts and the variety of documents I had to analyse in the process. It was a challenge to manage the rich data along with finding the right 'analytic paths through that richness' (Bryman, 2012; p.565). The choice of an appropriate method for analysing my data was largely informed by the epistemological stance I took for this study (interpretivism) as well as the research approach identified earlier (Hermeneutic Phenomenology).

For this purpose, I adapted elements from data analysis techniques suggested by different authors such as Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) for the three stages of qualitative data analysis (Data condensation, Data display and Drawing and verifying conclusions), Jonathan A. Smith and Mike Osborn (2015) and Braun and Clarke (2013) for Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and Braun and Clarke (2006) for Thematic Analysis (TA). The process of adapting these elements will be explained while I illustrate the systematic process by which I analysed my data. Keeping in mind the different data sets obtained and analysed in this project, this section has been divided into four sub-sections and describes the data analysis process separately for each data set. These sub-sections are:

a) Semi-structured interviews with Muslim headteachers (in both countries)

b) Focus group interviews with teachers

c) Focus group interviews with pupils

d) Document analysis

3.12.1. Semi-structured interviews with headteachers

The Muslim headteachers selected from both countries were the main participants of my study. The analysis of the above-mentioned data sets (although done separately) was carried out using the lens of the Muslim headteachers' analysis and conducted in a systematic manner for the two-phase interviews. In the paragraphs that follow, I will explain the steps involved in analysing the headteachers' interviews while referring to the different theories of data analysis (mentioned earlier).

1. The preparation for data analysis started with transcribing the interviews. The first-phase interviews of the Muslim headteachers were transcribed while I was still conducting them. The objective of doing so was to help me (a) become familiar with the data and (b) think about the initial analytical categories based on which I could design the second-phase interview guide *and* the focus groups interview guides for teachers and pupils.

2. The process of analysis of the first-phase interviews with headteachers started with coding their transcripts. As a form of 'data condensation' (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014), the codes were helpful in sorting and organising the data collected from the ten interviews. The process of creating the codes was initially deductive. That is the preliminary list of codes, which I later named as 'analytic categories' came from the first two research questions (see Section 3.3). Based on this coding, I was able to compress the first-phase interview data of the headteachers and display it in a matrix form. A snapshot of the matrix is presented in Appendix J. The matrix shows the three 'analytic categories' drawn from the initial deductive coding; (1) Principles, (2) Actions and (3) Guidance. It is important to note here that the Muslim headteachers (in both countries)

excessively used the words 'values' and 'beliefs' while describing their leadership actions and the principles underpinning these actions. Therefore, for the purpose of consistency in analysis, I defined the term 'principles' in the beginning and coded the terms 'values' and 'beliefs' under the category of 'principles'. The data display (shown in Appendix J) of the first-phase interviews was a first step in the data analysis process.

The display (see Appendix J) helped me understand the leadership actions, the principles underlying these actions and the sources of guidance to which the Muslim headteachers referred to while leading their schools. Without taking the Muslim headteachers out of the context, I took a contextualist approach by focusing on the person-in-context. By using IPA, I was able to explore the Muslim headteachers' lived experiences and the meanings they attached to those experiences (Braun and Clarke, 2013; p.181). In addition to developing an understanding of the Muslim headteachers' 'actions', 'principles' and 'guidance', another purpose of the first-level of coding was to see how the selected headteachers made sense of their religion. This was achieved by adding subcodes to the afore-mentioned initial codes.

The process of subcoding was particularly helpful since the primary codes (also called 'analytic categories') required 'more extensive categorising and subcategorising … for nuanced qualitative data analysis' (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014; p.80). By applying the subcodes 'religious', 'secular' and 'moral' to the 'principles' and 'guidance' categories, I could explore the various sources to which the Muslim headteachers attributed their leadership principles and sources of guidance, and which ultimately affected their leadership actions. As explained earlier, some of the questions set for the Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan were different; the rationale for this

difference was drawn from the preliminary analysis of the first-phase interviews of headteachers comprising the codes (analytic categories) and subcodes (religious, secular and moral). By employing these coding schemes, some 'dominant discourses' (Braun and Clarke, 2013; p.183) for principles, actions, guidance *and* religion (to some extent) were revealed which were different for the two sets of Muslim headteachers and were therefore used as a basis for designing the second-phase interview guide.

3. The second-phase interviews with Muslim headteachers were analysed in a different way. Since focus-group interviews with teachers and pupils were conducted around the same time (before or after) as the Muslim headteachers' final interviews, by that time, I had collected the entire data. Just like before, the transcription was done alongside the interviews so that I did not have too many interviews to transcribe in the end. At this stage of the analysis, I started writing case studies for each individual Muslim headteacher. The underlying objective of doing so was to present the Muslim headteachers' accounts (of their experiences and perceptions) of their leadership *and* their religion as constructed by *them* (the headteachers) in their respective contexts.

Owing to the voluminous data I had collected from the interviews, I decided to use a data analysis software, ATLAS.ti to help manage my data and facilitate me in writing the case studies. However, some initial attempts of managing the interview data with the help of this software led to de-contextualisation of the headteachers' accounts which eventually led to loss of meaning of what the headteachers said and why. Therefore, I decided to follow an organic approach, by coding and categorising the Muslim headteachers' responses manually, to present the rich findings generated by the two-phase interviews of the Muslim headteachers in the form of detailed case studies.

Although the selected Muslim headteachers were homogenous in terms of being Muslims of a Pakistani heritage, they were a diverse group of people whose perceptions and experiences varied considerably, not only between the two countries, but also within each country. Thus, focusing on the 'significant life experiences that often have implications for [our] identities, as they unfold in particular contexts', (Braun and Clarke, 2013; p.181), I analysed the case study findings while staying close to the Muslim headteachers' understanding of their experiences. The structure of the ten case studies was derived from a Thematic Analysis (TA) of the Muslim headteachers' interview transcripts. This method of analysis allowed me to identify themes across the datasets in relation to the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2013; p.175). The two broad themes into which the data was organised were 'Person in Profession' and 'Religion in Profession'. These themes were informed by (a) the initial coding of the first-phase interviews and (b) any additional codes that emerged from the two-phase interviews. In the latter case, I employed inductive analysis, which allowed for more themes to be generated that were relevant to the research questions *and* led to 'thick description'. Thus, the two themes underpinned the research questions as well as accommodated any emerging themes I had not reckoned.

The first theme 'Person in Profession' described in detail the self-understanding of the Muslim headteachers of their professional actions and the underlying principles and guidance. This theme corresponded to Phase I of data collection. In this phase, without presuming that religion would have any influence on the headteachers' professional role, I asked open exploratory questions which were informed by the literature and the research questions. I called this theme 'Person in Profession' because it allowed me to capture the rich self-description of the headteachers of their personal ideology and

educational practice. This description was derived from the analytic categories, principles, actions and guidance and embedded in the research questions and emphasised the individual interpretation of the headteachers of (i) what leadership principles they use and whether they are informed by their religion, (ii) what are their preferred sources of guidance and (iii) what contextual factors they perceive to influence their leadership actions.

The second theme 'Religion in Profession' explained in detail (a) how, and in what situations the Muslim headteachers used/expressed their religion and (b) how religion influenced (help/obstruct) the headteachers in carrying out their leadership roles. This theme corresponded to Phase II of data collection. The theme was named 'Religion in Profession' because it allowed me to emphasise the individual interpretation of the headteachers of their religion in a professional role. Unlike the first theme, the second theme was mostly derived from an 'inductive thematic analysis' (Braun and Clarke, 2006; p.83). However, the use of deductive coding in the first-phase interviews, led me to phrase questions for the second-phase interviews in such a way that they focused on the Muslim headteachers' religion, their religious identity and their religiosity; themes which 'emerged progressively' and were 'grounded empirically' in the headteachers' first-phase responses (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014; p.81). Thus, a combination of deductive-inductive thematic analysis enabled me to explore in depth what the headteachers had to say about their religion.

In addition to including an in-depth analysis of the Muslim headteachers' responses in the case studies, I triangulated their responses with focus group interview data of the

teachers and pupils and with the relevant content from the documents. This will be explained while describing the data analyses for other data sets.

4. While doing the analysis of findings for writing the case studies, I sought to represent the Muslim headteachers' understanding of the phenomenon of interest to the extent to which they explained it themselves. This was the first level of interpretation. Having completed all ten case studies, I then analysed them as groups, i.e. group of Pakistani Muslim headteachers and group of British Muslim headteachers (of Pakistani origin). The synthesis of the findings for each set of headteachers was presented in Part II (Findings) of the chapters comprising the case studies (Chapters 4 and 5). This synthesis was based on an interpretive analysis which included my interpretation of what the headteachers said and incorporated a comparison of the four data sets, that is accounts of the Muslim headteachers, teachers and pupils and documentary data of the respective schools. While doing so, I engaged in a second level of critical analysis, also known as 'dual interpretive process or double hermeneutics' (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Smith and Osborn, 2015).

At the second level of analysis, I compared each set of headteachers using the same themes as identified in Part I, that is (a) Person in profession and (b) Religion in profession. The first theme covered aspects such as (i) various principles as understood and described by the selected Muslim headteachers, (ii) the way in which the principles manifested themselves in various leadership actions of the selected Muslim headteachers and (iii) various contextual factors which influenced the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers. Under the second theme, 'Religion in profession', three additional sub-

themes emerged. These were (i) expression of religion, (ii) discourse of religion and (iii) religion and culture

5. The final step in the analysis of the Muslim headteachers' two-phase interviews was a 'comparative analysis' of the selected headteachers in England and Pakistan. This kind of analysis comprised a synthesis of the analysis presented in Chapters 4 and 5 and the literature (Chapter 2). In an attempt to align the two themes, identified earlier, with the multi-level contextual framework developed in Chapter 2, findings of this study were evaluated in a way that that macro (societal), meso (institutional) and micro (personal) level factors which influenced the articulation of Muslim headteachers' principles, actions and guidance were highlighted.

3.12.2. Focus group interviews with teachers and pupils

The analysis of the focus-group interviews of teachers and pupils was conducted while writing case studies As mentioned earlier, the main focus of my study was the Muslim headteachers. Obtaining multiple perspectives of (some) teachers and pupils in their respective schools was a way of checking whether the Muslim headteachers' perceptions of their leadership *and* their religion were experienced in a similar, or different way by these people. Additionally, the multiple perspectives provided an element of checking that what the headteachers said about the translation of principles to practice was a practical reality experienced by those with who they worked. Thus, the teachers' and pupils' accounts provided an additional perspective about the Muslim headteachers' leadership roles, which sometimes matched with the headteachers' own perceptions and sometimes did not.

Although a number of questions were asked from teachers and pupils in the focus group interviews (see Appendices H and I), and transcribed in full, the analysis of their responses was limited to the key themes identified in the Muslim headteachers' interviews. The rationale for the selective analysis was (a) to emphasise the importance of the identified themes (in the Muslim headteachers' interviews) in relation to the research questions set for this project, and (b) to ensure that the reporting of the results remained focused on the research objective. Therefore, from the teacher focus group interview transcripts, I selected and coded those responses in which they talked about their respective headteachers' 'leadership principles' and their 'religion'. By doing so, I could compare the understanding of Muslim headteachers of their principles with that of the teachers. Similarly, the theme of 'religion' facilitated in analysing how the Muslim headteachers' religion was perceived by the teachers and their (teachers') perception/interpretation of the ways in which their respective headteachers used religion in a professional role.

From the pupil focus group interview transcripts, I selected and coded only those responses in which the pupils talked about their experiences of the headteachers' actions and their religion. By using these two themes for analysing pupil focus group interviews, I was able to understand how pupils (of different age groups) perceived their respective headteachers' leadership actions by reflecting on their interaction/relationship with them. Moreover, the theme 'religion' provided insights into the pupils' perspectives of how they experienced their respective headteachers' religion and the extent to which they considered religion important in a leadership role.

The selective analysis of the teachers' and pupils' focus group interviews was included in the case studies for individual Muslim headteachers. While narrating the Muslim headteachers' accounts, the selective themes from the teachers' and pupils' accounts were used to establish a link

between the Muslim headteachers, the teachers and the pupils. This helped make the case studies more complete and coherent.

3.12.3. Document analysis

The documents selected for this study, described in *Section 3.7*., were analysed differently for England and Pakistan. For example, in England, the similarity between the Muslim headteachers' common discourse of leadership principles and the selected documents was mentioned in both levels of analyses; i.e. the Muslim headteachers' interpretation of their leadership actions and principles and my interpretation of the headteachers' interpretation. In Pakistan, some official documents, described earlier, were studied to analyse the extent to which the Muslim headteachers' leadership actions were influenced by them as the MHIP frequently referred to the statutory guidance. Additionally, some of the selected documents were analysed to explore the dominance of Islam, apparent in both the headteachers' narratives *and* the context in which the headteachers worked (institutional and societal). Hence, the documentary/factual data included in the documents (in both countries) was used as a cross reference in the case studies which contained detailed accounts of the Muslim headteachers' perceptions and experiences.

3.13. ENSURING RELIABILITY

Owing to the qualitative and naturalistic stance taken for the present study, the reliability and validity of the findings were ensured using Guba and Lincoln's (1994) criteria of 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity' for evaluating qualitative research.

3.13.1. Trustworthiness

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), there are no 'absolute truths' in qualitative research; instead there can be multiple truths revealed through several accounts. The four criteria that constitute trustworthiness are (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability and (d) confirmability.

Credibility: Credibility, an alternative to 'validity' in quantitative research, was achieved in a number of ways in the present study. First, all interviews were conducted with research participants in the 'natural setting' of their schools, which facilitated in building rapport with the research participants, especially the Muslim headteachers. Thus data collected was 'socially situated' and 'contextually-bounded' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; p.180). By maintaining regular contact with the Muslim headteachers via email (in England) and telephone (in Pakistan) in relation to the process of data collection, I developed a relationship of trust with the headteachers which was crucial for the smooth running of interviews in the two phases.

The use of multiple 'methods' of data collection allowed triangulation of responses, which helped in explaining in detail 'the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; p.195). While triangulating the Muslim headteachers' accounts with those of teachers and pupils and documentary data, I emphasised on those aspects in the Muslim headteachers' responses which were directly related to the research questions and the phenomenon under study. In addition to this, respondent validation was also carried out; a process where I gave the Muslim headteachers an opportunity to read their transcripts to ensure that they were transcribed accurately. By addressing various ethical issues such as voluntary informed consent, confidentiality and

anonymity and the right to withdraw, I assured the participants of the credible nature of the study.

The design of the research instruments also added to the credibility of this research. An initial interview guide was piloted with some Muslim headteachers in both countries. I constantly reflected on the designing of the research instruments and shared the reflection reports with my supervisors. The interview guides for the Muslim headteachers, teachers and pupils were finalised after careful deliberation and numerous feedback sessions with my supervisors.

The process of data analysis is also crucial for ensuring the credibility of a research project. The whole process of data analysis in the present study (see Section 3.12) was a systematic process where I was careful in using methods which matched with the interpretive and hermeneutic stance taken for this study. Since the social phenomenon formed the basis of inquiry for my research, I was both sensitive and critical towards interpreting the Muslim headteachers' accounts as accurately as possible. For this purpose, the 'double hermeneutic' exercise in which I had to interpret the Muslim headteachers' responses at two levels, was not done in isolation. For example, I regularly discussed my analyses with my supervisors and presented my research at conferences where I received valuable feedback.

Transferability: The size of the sample (five Muslim headteachers from each country) was small in this research as my aim was to study in depth the social phenomenon as experienced by the selected Muslim headteachers themselves. Owing to the 'contextual uniqueness and significance of the social world being studied' (Bryman, 2012; p.392), transferring the findings of this study to other research studies may or may not be possible. The lack of certainty in applying the conclusions of this study to other situations resides in the interpretive nature of this research.

The meaning associated to the place of religion in a professional role was done in a particular context by the Muslim headteachers. Without removing the meaning from the context in which it was created, conclusions drawn from interpretive studies act as a background in which other researchers make decisions since 'humans do not always behave in predictable, stable ways' (Willis, 2007; p.223).

Dependability: Dependability in qualitative research can be achieved by taking an 'auditing' approach (Bryman, 2012; p.392). This entails being meticulous in every step of the research process including the identification of research purpose, selecting an appropriate research strategy, selecting research participants and describing in detail the steps of data collection and data analysis. All these aspects have been explained in detail in the previous sections of this chapter along with their limitations.

Confirmability: The interpretive nature of the present study called for careful consideration of the confirmability or objectivity of my interpretations of the Muslim headteachers' responses. To ensure that my findings were confirmable, I practiced "bracketing out" my own presuppositions about religion (please note that there are difficulties with this methodology) and reported the Muslim headteachers' subjective opinions about the place of religion in a professional role as objectively as possible. The objectivity of my interpretations was audited by my supervisors who provided regular feedback while I was conducting the analysis.

3.13.2. Authenticity

The criteria of authenticity deal with issues 'concerning the wider political impact of research' (Bryman, 2012, p.393). The authenticity of the present research was achieved in several ways.

For example, by taking an ontological stance of 'social constructivism', I prioritised the subjective interpretations of the Muslim headteachers about their religion in a way that other Muslim headteachers can also relate to them. Moreover, by comparing and contrasting the viewpoints of Muslim headteachers in two culturally diverse countries, I maintained the importance of context (individual, institutional and national) in shaping the Muslim headteachers' ideas about religion. Such a context-based comparison can help other Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan develop their understanding of their own social milieus.

3.14. SUMMARY

The social phenomenon, which I defined as the 'place of religion in a professional role', set the foundation for this study. The choice of epistemology and research methodology was based on the social phenomenon. By taking an interpretivist stance, I chose Hermeneutic Phenomenology as the research strategy for this project. By using interviews (semi-structured interviews with Muslim headteachers and focus group interviews with teachers and pupil) as a research tool, I explained how I gained insight into the Muslim headteachers' perception and interpretation of the place of religion in a professional role. The case for conducting a comparative study between England and Pakistan was justified by emphasising the importance of context in which the Muslim headteachers constructed their meanings of the social phenomenon. The cross-national research design called for describing the sampling, designing of the research tools, piloting, process of data collection and process of data analysis separately for England and Pakistan. Following the same comparative approach, the subsequent chapters will discuss the findings for each country (a) individually – Chapters 4 and 5, and (b) collectively – Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 4

PART 1

NARRATIVE CASE STUDIES OF MUSLIM HEADTEACHERS IN ENGLAND

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter comprises two parts. In Part I, I present the five narrative case studies of the Muslim headteachers in England (MHIE) and in Part II, I synthesise the findings of the five case studies. For each of the case studies, I have foregrounded the data as I want the data to speak at this point and the interpretation will follow. Therefore, all direct quotations from the respondents will appear in Part I.

It is important to note that Chapters 4, 5 and 6 correspond to three different stages of data organisation. In the first stage (Part I of Chapters 4 and 5), the data will be categorised under two broad themes identified and explained earlier in Chapter 3 (see *Section 3.12.1*) with some degree of editing and interpretation. These are (a) Person in profession and (b) Religion in profession. While the first theme describes in detail the self-understanding of the headteachers' professional actions and the underlying principles and guidance in light of their religion, the second theme, in particular looks at the various aspects of the headteachers' religion. In the second stage of data organisation (Part II of Chapters 4 and 5), I will draw out the key findings from the case studies (under the same themes) while comparing the Muslim headteachers within each country. Finally in the third stage (Chapter 6), I will critically engage with the comparative dimensions of this research by comparing and contrasting the findings of this study with those from previous research studies while drawing links between them.

The varying depth and breadth of the narrative case studies implies that each Muslim headteacher was a unique individual, who had a different perception and interpretation of religion in a professional role. The thematic presentation of the findings also includes the teachers' and pupils' perspectives. The five MHIE will be referred to by pseudonyms (see Appendix K). The acronyms used for teachers and pupils in the respective focus groups in each school, along with the composition of each group are given in Appendix N. Since the focus of this study was to understand the perception and interpretation of Muslim headteachers' religion in their professional role, the selection of the schools was not of prime concern. However, the review of literature emphasised the importance of context in which the headteachers worked. Therefore, some basic demographic facts about the five MHIE and the schools in which they were working is provided in Appendix M.

4.2. HEADTEACHER AHMAD

4.2.1 About Ahmad and his school

Ahmad was the headteacher of an 11-19 secondary school in West Midlands. Most students in his school belonged to minority ethnic backgrounds. The predominant group of students was from the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities but there were also a number of minority ethnic heritages represented. The largest group with an affiliation to a particular religion were Muslims who represented 44% of the pupil population.

Ahmad grew up in Wales. His parents migrated to UK, from Pakistan, in the mid-sixties. In terms of practising his faith, Ahmad explained how his father made him go to the mosque to learn the Qur'an and he resented doing that since there were only a handful of Muslims where

they lived and he experienced bullying. However, his parents helped him understand the purpose of following his religion. Ahmad joined the current school as a headteacher in 2006. His motivation of joining the teaching profession came from the teachers who inspired him and he progressed into senior positions swiftly; however, he believed that this progress had been negatively affected by his identity as a Muslim.

4.2.2. Person in profession

Ahmad's ethnic and religious identity influenced his leadership role in a number of ways. Whilst his religious identity hindered him to move to a senior position within the teaching profession, he admitted, it also supported him in a number of ways. His experience as a headteacher with an understanding of the majority culture in the school, i.e. Islam was a positive aspect of his professional portfolio as there were not many headteachers who had that breadth of experience. Ahmad described three aspects of poverty he experienced in the school namely (a) poverty of finance, (b) poverty of aspirations and (c) poverty of health. Since most of these issues were faced by Asian parents, Ahmad used his personal experiences to devise strategies that helped in resolving these issues. The following paragraphs will examine these strategies in detail and highlight the actions taken by Ahmad and the principles that underpinned these actions. In so doing, the relationship between (a) what Ahmad said and what he did and (b) what he did and how it was experienced by teachers and pupils will be highlighted.

Ahmad claimed that he tried to do the best for the children entrusted in his care. He described this belief in terms of showing mutual respect and compassion to the students:

> This is about my beliefs. And my belief is about the mutual respect, compassion, making sure that we meet the needs of the youngsters we serve because that's the role we are in…

He aimed to meet the need of those children who lacked the necessary skills of reading and writing and who were below the national average in terms of academic ability. Pupils acknowledged Ahmad's importance in the school in the following way:

> … he is the one who makes the school a better learning environment and a better place for the children to study… he wants to make the pupils to feel like they belong to the school

The Ofsted team also observed that Ahmad was clear about his job and was determined to change the lives of pupils within his school. This confirmed Ahmad's efforts of improving the reading and writing skills of children who were below the national average.

Ahmad tried to create a culture of learning characterised by a harmonious and cohesive working environment in the school. He explained that this was achieved through the willingness of the existing and potential staff to buy into the ethos of the school:

> I always meet potential candidates and often spend 10-15 minutes with them sharing with them my philosophy of work and it's about them buying into that as part of the interview process

The teachers' responses in the focus group, however, suggested that they could not relate to the principles used by Ahmad. These teachers were all Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) who had been in the school for a few weeks/months only. Therefore, their perception of Ahmad was restricted to a few administrative tasks; for example, managing finances, signing important documents, greeting people when he saw them and attending meetings. As all teachers in the focus group explained, they did not see Ahmad a lot and since they had very little or no interaction with him, they could not talk about his principles.

According to Ahmad, his school served the top eight most-deprived wards in the country. The deprivation was linked to the three aspects of poverty identified earlier. While dealing with these aspects which were particularly prevalent in the Asian community, Ahmad engaged in conversations with these parents to improve the pupils' access to education and additional teaching and learning opportunities. In this case, Ahmad explained that he used the principle of raising the aspirations of pupils as well as their parents. By encouraging parents to get involved in the school decision-making process, Ahmad felt he could help them improve their relationship with their children:

> … this is back to investing in your children… all I'm asking is from you is to be part of, when the decisions are going to be made, I want an input from each community.

Another principle Ahmad mentioned was showing compassion to the deprived pupils while maintaining their respect and dignity. This compassion applied to pupils and members of staff, regardless of their religion and culture. For example, while giving extra days to staff members for a funeral, Ahmad believed that:

> … Although the leave of absence policy is quite rigid, my understanding is that one day isn't enough regardless of culture, regardless of religion, and therefore wouldn't it be better to allow that compassion to be also exercised for members of staff?

While dealing with diversity, cultural as well as religious, Ahmad claimed that he used the principle of integration. He tried to help pupils integrate into the mainstream school rather than staying isolated:

> The whole idea is they come in, they funnel in from all sorts of walks of life… I want them all to be together. And *that,* whether they are my own beliefs, or whether that's an educational pedagogy belief, but that's certainly what I drive for within the school…

Pupils agreed that Ahmad treated everyone equally. One of the pupils stated that:

> He looks at them as teachers and students. He doesn't look at them based on their background.

While Ahmad claimed to employ a number of ways to deal with diversity in his school, he also tried to make his staff understand the diverse needs of the pupils:

> I am not expecting everybody to become an expert in all religions, but they need to have an awareness of the different [religious and otherwise] needs of pupils…

His efforts, of making the staff aware of the requirements of different religions, were acknowledged by the teachers as well. They confirmed that Ahmad accommodated the Muslim students for their daily prayers by allowing them to pray in a multi-faith room built for this purpose.

To conclude this section, Ahmad described most of his leadership principles in relation to the various aspects of poverty he experienced in his school. These included raising aspirations, showing compassion, maintaining the dignity and respect of pupils, creating a cohesive and harmonious environment and doing the best for all pupils in his care.

4.2.3. Religion in profession

Although Ahmad perceived his religious identity as a hindrance in moving to a senior position within the teaching profession, he believed that there were positive aspects of his identity as well such as understanding the religious needs of the Muslim pupils and having conversations with Asian Muslim parents regarding parenting and isolation issues which were quite common in their community. Ahmad described that he did not experience any conflict between his religion and his professional role:

> I think, personally it [religion] hasn't made any difference. It certainly has questioned, in the way it has been interpreted. I think on a personal basis, I think my beliefs are my beliefs. I can take elements of it but I'm employed as a headteacher and therefore I have to be clear about the demarcation of that.

Ahmad felt that as a *Muslim* headteacher, he had to make an extra effort to help students (Muslims in particular) learn how to live together. This was particularly an issue since a lot of Pakistani parents were not willing to accept that they were staying in this country for long. This attitude restrained them to become active members of the society in which they lived:

> They're not going back! So, they might as well come to terms with it. If they are going to be successful, here, they can maintain their religious identity, but they've got to reinvest into the national budget.

Ahmad reported several instances where he was challenged by parents (mostly Muslim, but in some cases, Sikhs as well) when they shared their concerns with him and 'expected' him to understand their concerns based on his religious background:

> … that challenge remains with me… and that's where I think anybody, particularly a Muslim head, has to be able to differentiate between where the religious aspect of it is and what job you're here to do.

In other instances, parents and students would raise issues regarding permission to do music from a faith perspective. In such cases, he had to convince such parents that he had to follow the National Curriculum:

> … my line on this is fairly simplistic. I'm duty-bound by my job to make sure that a broad and balanced curriculum is being delivered… As a school, we're a secular school.

While parents challenged Ahmad for his association with Islam and tried convincing him on the basis of his religious association, he was conscious about drawing the line between religion and profession. Since the school represented different cultures and different faiths, Ahmad was careful not to bring in his own religion while performing his professional duties:

> … unless religion prohibits, at which point I am then denying your right to express religion, other than that, everything is permissible… if they choose not to do it, they are then at a liberty, and their families are at liberty to find themselves a school that supports their ethos and ideology.

Regarding the expression of faith in a public institution, Ahmad did not find this problematic. However, he admitted that he was flexible in performing rituals like the daily prayers, especially when doing his job:

> … I don't think I should be really rigid in saying I must say my prayers in that moment in time because this religion has an element of flexibility. I'm employed to do a job... therefore there should be some flexibility on my part rather than causing disruption to the organisation.

According to the teachers, Ahmad did not talk about his own religion:

> No religion is talked about in school; I don't think you're allowed to do that.

They explained that Ahmad did not show or do anything overt to say he was a Muslim. They regarded Ahmad's faith useful in terms of understanding the religious needs of the majority of the pupils in the school:

> I guess, he'd have a better understanding as compared to someone who's a non-Muslim. But at the same time, he has to be professional at all times. I think a lot of the headteachers were under scrutiny for extremist, you know…

The pupils also agreed that Ahmad did not make it explicit that he was a Muslim:

> I don't think he brings his religion into his work… He does have personal conversations with students but never about religion.

The pupils perceived him as performing two roles; one as a Muslim and the other as a headteacher:

> It can be merged. Like our headteacher is a Muslim; only a *Muslim* headteacher can advise a Muslim student better … But he will still have to follow the rules.

Although Ahmad's narrative and the teachers' and students' accounts affirmed that he was not explicit in expressing his religion, this was a concern which was raised during the Trojan Horse Controversy (THC). Ahmad referred to the THC as an event which made him question the way

he interpreted his religion. He believed that there were a number of diverse issues highlighted in the controversy, which all got intertwined and were painted as a 'religious issue'. According to Ahmad,

> The allegations about the social media posts put up by the staff had nothing to do with religion; rather they could have been alleged at any kind of organisation. Secondly the decision of selling halal food was a commercial decision i.e. schools where there were 99 or 100% Muslims, it was a commercial need to sell halal food. But it was misinterpreted as a leadership decision. Finally, the schools where members of staff were promoted was a leadership allegation rather than a religious one.

Ahmad's support of the "Trojan Horse" (TH) schools and his own perception of the controversy suggested that he stood strong in the face of all the allegations and apprehensions directed towards him during the THC by holding on to his principles. These principles, as explained in the previous section, helped in portraying him as a strong professional who knew his job well and who was not willing to compromise his professional role for his association with a particular faith. Thus, he managed his religious identity in a way that it did not conflict with his leadership responsibilities.

4.3. HEADTEACHER KHALID

4.3.1. About Khalid and his school

Khalid was the headteacher of a 'larger than average-sized' all-through school for pupils aged 4-19 in Birmingham. According to the 2011 Census, this ward was amongst the three wards in Birmingham, which had the largest number of Muslims, i.e. 73.9%. Of these, about 51% of the Muslims were of Pakistani origin. Almost all students were from minority ethnic groups and Pakistanis constituted the largest group (about 48%) followed by Somalis (26%).

Khalid was born and raised in England. His parents migrated from Kashmir, Pakistan. As a Muslim child growing up in England, he did not get much [religious] support from his family as his parents were away and his sister-in-law was British. According to Khalid, there were two factors which influenced the way he expressed himself as a Muslim; (a) his open-minded and liberal approach that he acquired from the upbringing of an uncle and (b) the series of events which took place from the time he was a teenager till later years. These included the publishing of Salman Rushdie's book, 'The Satanic Verses' (1998); the 9/11 incidence (2001), the 7/7 bombings (2005) and the Trojan Horse Controversy, THC (2014). Khalid joined the school in Birmingham in 2005. Since he had lived in the same area as a child and gone to the same school, he inquired from a few people about their perceptions of the school and it was the viewpoints he came across, which inspired him to take on the role of a headteacher of this school.

4.3.2. Person in profession

Talking about various aspects of his leadership, Khalid emphasised the use of different 'values'. Khalid regarded these values or 'personal beliefs', as he called them, more important than his 'religious beliefs' while leading the school:

> … religion for me is not outfacing. It's how I conduct myself and lead my life as an individual…

His actions, he explained, reflected what he believed in his heart as the right thing to do. Khalid particularly emphasised the humanitarian value that, for him, stretched across all religions. He attributed this value to the attitude of liberal mindedness, which helped him in dealing with a lot of issues:

> It has allowed me to actually tackle all, a lot of, prejudices through that value in terms of looking at anything to do with religious differences, cultural differences, homophobia, any sort of racism, prejudices…

In addition to the value of humanity, Khalid used a number of other values which he expressed every now and then in his interviews. For example, being respectful to other religions and cultures, supporting individuals in his care, giving charity, showing compassion, equality and professional integrity were described as 'core values' by Khalid which he would never compromise.

Even though Khalid took his professional duties as a headteacher quite seriously, he was content that whatever values he used in his professional role sufficed for his obligations as a Muslim:

> … at the end of the day, we're all answerable, and that's a strong belief that I'm answerable to God… and whatever I do, I have always got that strongly in mind… if I act with that integrity, with that humanity, then I know that whatever I'm doing is for the best and what I believe is to be right.

By holding on to the core values, beliefs and principles, Khalid was confident that not only did he do justice to his professional role as a headteacher, but also fulfilled his responsibilities as a Muslim. Right from the beginning, Khalid established a clear link between his own values and those of the school:

> My own personal beliefs and values are very much based around humanity and very much linked into our school values, which are Humanity, Equality, Aspiration and Respect.

These values were mirrored in the school ethos which claimed that:

> through our school values of Humanity, Equality, Aspiration and Respect we have created an environment that allows all learners to flourish… (School Website)

He believed that people in his school, respected him for being strongly grounded in his values:

> … now they don't see me as somebody religious; they see me as somebody who's got very strong values that I will not compromise.

One of the teachers in a focus group said that the school values were the underlying principles for all; teachers as well as the headteacher. Teachers emphasised the similarity between the school values, Khalid's values (which they called his principles) and their own principles:

> … the fact that he's [Khalid] always committed to his role and it just makes us, as staff, think about what he's doing and then it obviously makes *us* go that extra mile…

In addition to the school values, the teachers observed some other principles that Khalid used in his leadership. For example, working with different charities, and not just Islamic charities; believing in and promoting equality by respecting the cultural identity of everyone regardless of faith; showing care for the staff through personal involvement (teachers related an incident from the previous year, where Khalid cooked the Christmas meal for his staff himself); showing respect for everyone's beliefs and celebrations and consequently accepting and practising the 'British' values.

To promote the school ethos of Humanity, Equality, Aspirations and Respect, as well as "Learning through Diversity", one of the most significant events held in the school was the Diversity Day. This day provided the pupils an opportunity to learn about different cultures, heritage, society and history and meanwhile develop the values of tolerance, respect and empathy. Pupils in the focus groups appreciated the idea of celebrating *all* religions and cultures, not any particular one. Teachers in the focus group TEK2 also agreed that a lot of emphasis was placed on diversity:

> The school is everything about diversity; it's not about who you are, where you come from, what your background is…

Even though majority of the pupils were Muslims, the teachers explained that Khalid tried to equip the pupils with the knowledge of different faiths so they could adjust in a multicultural society:

> he's [Khalid] always given opportunities to explore other faiths, other religions…

Khalid endeavoured to raise the aspirations of pupils and teachers in his school in different ways. For example, teachers in both focus groups acknowledged that Khalid provided opportunities to the staff to be promoted from within:

> … the people he knows, what he's doing here is he is promoting them. He knows what they can do and that I think is a really good thing.

While the impact of Khalid's aspiration (as a principle) was positive for the teachers, the implication of this principle for the pupils was very unusual. The pupils' responses in both focus groups suggested that Khalid did not seem to make a lot of difference to the school. Although they acknowledged that his role was important, the fact that they did not see much of him refrained them from being aspired by his vision for the school:

> … if Khalid was to spend a bit more time where he was engaging with the pupils, that would be better for the students and the school as a whole.

While most pupils in the focus groups regarded their communication with Khalid as insufficient, there was one Year 11 pupil, a council member, who had a different opinion:

> I think he is behind the closed doors a lot, but you've got to be reminded that this is his job... If there are no students, there is no school…

In summary, Khalid assimilated the school values of Humanity, Equality, Aspirations and Respect as his own principles. Other principles that Khalid claimed to use were acting with professional integrity, showing compassion and supporting individuals in his care.

4.3.3. Religion in profession

In terms of people's perceptions of his religion, Khalid described that his own staff saw him as an individual rather than a Muslim:

> I don't think religion is seen externally.

Teachers in the focus groups were aware that Khalid was a Muslim. However, this knowledge did not have a significant impact on them, as they considered religion a private matter:

> I know that he's a Muslim headteacher and for me that's not a particular question I would ask anyone…

Another teacher in TEK2 said:

> I think he identifies himself as a Muslim. How much he follows and how much he subscribes to it is his choice…

Teachers also confirmed that Khalid led the school with his values (school values which he had assimilated as his own) rather than his faith:

> … I think the reason it really doesn't matter is that, it's not from his faith that Khalid is leading; he's leading through his values and what he wants the school to be.

The teachers in TEK2 explained that conversations about Khalid's religion were more common between parents who tried to speculate his degree of religiosity:

> …he [Khalid] gets a little bit flagged from the community about how much he practices his faith, whether he practices it enough or not and what impact that has upon the students.

While dealing with such parents, Khalid explained he had to challenge the viewpoints of parents when they prohibited their children from participating in music or when a parent asked Khalid on one occasion if their daughter could wear a *niqaab* (veil used to cover the face) in addition to a

hijaab (head-cover). In both cases, Khalid claimed to use his knowledge of the religion as well the statutory guidance for headteachers to justify the parents.

There were other instances where Khalid had to take an action in line with the school values and his own principles while marginalising his religion to some extent. For example, while educating pupils about gays, lesbians and bi-trans relationships, Khalid acknowledged that there were different viewpoints on these issues within and across religions. However, by using his knowledge of the religion, Khalid aimed to remove people's ignorance about Islam and its rituals:

> We ensure that students do not grow up to be prejudiced against LBGT communities even if they may differ from a religious point of view…What we're teaching them is an understanding that in society, to be successful in life, you will be coming across people from all walks of life and you *have* to engage with them, and you need to show respect.

While most teachers in the focus groups argued that there were no conversations about Khalid's religion, there was one teacher in TEK2 who viewed religion as having a strong presence in the school:

> Religion has a huge impact on the way the school is run but not because it's the headteacher's faith or because it's one particular person's faith. It's because it's diversity, the faiths that make up our school.

Thus, within the school, there was a lot of emphasis on diversity and Khalid's faith, like all other faiths, constituted this diversity. Therefore, the synergy between religions enriched the environment of the school, and Khalid's own religion supported this environment because it was the religion of the majority.

As for pupils' perceptions about Khalid's faith, they asserted that his religion did not affect the way he run the school:

> As far as religion and faith come into it, he's a *headteacher*, so obviously, his professionality and his name plate [with OBE on it] comes before his religion…but he's a headteacher… So, when you walk through the gates, you'll see Khalid-OBE. You wouldn't see, Khalid-Muslim.

Pupils in PEK1 had slightly different views about Khalid's religion. The fact that he was a Muslim made some pupils in the group proud of him:

> We know we have the type of leader who will respect us [pupils] as Muslims and give us the things as Muslims, freedom as Muslims, like Friday prayers.

Since Muslims were in majority in the school, they were inclined to relate to him based on his religious identity. However, when it came to running the school, these pupils affirmed that Khalid would not take decisions or make rules in a religious way:

> He's [Khalid] a normal headteacher, but he would allow for prayers. But he wouldn't base his rules on religion…

These statements demonstrate how Khalid expressed his religion and how the pupils and teachers in the school perceived his use of religion in a professional role. In addition to the above perceptions of Khalid's religion and its expression in a professional role, the THC was a stressful time for Khalid. The inspections and inquiry resulting from the controversy made him question his own cultural and religious identity:

> this is our job on line here and is it fair that we're being scrutinised and challenged at this level and are we being really treated equally?

The THC led to such biases and prejudices which undermined his professional expertise for his religious identity:

> … what is out there is a perception of people of Muslim background, Muslim headteachers… I never came here because of my faith background or the colour of my skin. I came to this position as a professional, as a headteacher.

Khalid reported that he had complete support from his staff during the inspections carried out because of the THC. According to the teachers, the inspections, were particularly challenging since the Ofsted inspectors came with 'an agenda':

> …they will put to you what *they* want to see, not the other way round. You don't call the shots.

Explaining the impact of the THC on British values and vice versa, Khalid claimed that he heard the children saying, 'this whole thing [THC] has made us feel less British'. To conclude, Khalid confirmed that he did not let his religious identity compromise his professional duties. However, there were instances, as Khalid explained, when parents questioned his religious affiliation and the extent to which he practised elements of his faith, for example, when following the National Curriculum.

4.4. HEADTEACHER SAJJAD

4.4.1. About Sajjad and his school

Sajjad was the headteacher of a large primary school in the North of Birmingham. He joined this school in 2009. The vast majority, well over 95%, of the pupils in the school were Muslims. The small number of non-Muslims pupils came from Sikh, Hindu and Christian families. The two significant ethnic groups which made up about 92-93% of the total pupil population were Pakistani and Bangladeshi. Sajjad was born in England and grew up in inner city Birmingham. As a child, he went to a school within a neighbourhood quite similar to what the pupils in his school experienced now. He considered this to be one of the reasons that he could relate to the experiences of the pupils and their families.

4.4.2. Person in the profession

From his two interviews, it was evident that some of Sajjad's leadership actions were influenced by the Standards and statutory requirements for leading state schools, whilst at other times, his leadership actions were driven by his own moral and spiritual standards. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss Sajjad's leadership actions in a way that the underlying principles and sources of guidance are highlighted.

Reflecting on his experiences of growing up in inner city Birmingham, Sajjad was determined to provide the best possible education to pupils in his school. He acknowledged the fact that the only chance pupils in this school had for a secure future was through good education:

> the ethos, the driver behind everything I do is that whatever I see in school, whatever is happening, the question that I ask myself is that "is it good enough for my own children"?

With a determination that all staff would agree with this guiding principle, the various leadership actions of Sajjad illustrated how he incorporated the statutory guidance as well as the core values included in this ethos and mindset.

Sajjad emphasised some key principles that guided him in his decision-making as a headteacher. These were the principles of fairness, equity, justice, honesty and integrity. These values or 'elements of leadership' as Sajjad called them, were like a 'moral compass' for him and he derived this morality from his faith:

> … my decision-making has to be underpinned by that morality and that morality comes from faith, so the two are very much intertwined…

In the various examples he gave where he faced challenging situations, Sajjad explained that he always referred to his moral compass to question himself if he had done the right thing.

Sajjad recalled that there were moments in his leadership where he had to take difficult decisions in terms of holding people to account for their actions. Such decisions were not easy and what helped him was the ability to sleep at night knowing that he had not treated anyone unfairly:

> So, when you're making decisions like that, you have to be comfortable with the integrity of those decisions.

Thus, before asking a member of staff to leave, Sajjad ensured that he gave him/her every possible opportunity to succeed and did everything possible to support them. But in the end, he was duty-bound to take a disciplinary action. In so doing, Sajjad explained that there was some 'soul-searching' involved:

> I have to make decisions that have impact on their lives and the soul-searching is about, "have I made the right decision? As a Muslim, have I done the right thing? Morally have I made the right decision?"

Sajjad described the community served by the school as 'challenging'. The two challenging aspects, articulated by Sajjad, were (a) the socially deprived pupils and (b) pupils whose parents were involved in some crime:

> … a significant majority of our pupils come from very socially deprived backgrounds. So, we have to make allowances for that.

For example, he described an incidence where he took a pupil to Tesco to buy her uniform because she could not afford it. On another occasion, he bought equipment for a pupil who had to go on a residential trip. On several occasions, Sajjad also had to refer families to food banks because they did not have enough food in their house.

Apart from the deprivation factor, Sajjad also encountered pupils who required support because either of the parents was involved in a crime. For example, there was a case of domestic violence where the mother wanted the child to attend school. Since it was not safe for him to walk to school, Sajjad arranged a special bus for the pupil.

Sajjad maintained that just like pupils, he had high expectations from the members of his staff. Considering the challenging backgrounds of the pupils, Sajjad was conscious about maintaining a good relationship with his staff and talking to them on a regular basis to promote a shared ethos:

> … I'm not an easy headteacher to work for, in terms of expectation… teaching has to be a vocation for you… It's not the kind of school where you're going to get the job that just pays the bills…

Describing her experience of working with Sajjad, the teacher who was interviewed described him as a 'catalyst in the success of this school'. She confirmed that Sajjad provided a lot of professional support to the teachers so they could enjoy their profession and feel appreciated.

In summary, the key principles Sajjad used in his leadership, and which he called 'elements of leadership' were fairness, equity, justice, honesty and integrity.

4.4.3. Religion in profession

As a Muslim child growing up in England, Sajjad experienced two distinct identities:

> You had your identity at home, which is about faith and your culture, your language and you had an identity at school which was about learning.

As he joined the teaching profession, he realised that the headteachers at that time recognised the importance of having a Muslim male teacher within the school system. Thus, his religious and ethnic identities became an asset for the schools in which he worked.

Sajjad felt much more at ease in his dual identity as an educator *and* a practicing Muslim from his mid-twenties onwards:

> It was only when you have clarity in your own identity, that you develop that confidence about your identity and you can really engage with people from other faiths and other cultures and other backgrounds without trying to be somebody that you're not.

Once confident about his faith identity, Sajjad felt obligated to 'have very high standards of fairness and of general practice' since he believed the two were closely linked.

Sajjad stated that he felt a dual responsibility in his actions as a headteacher. On the one hand, he was representing an institution, that is, his school. But on the other hand, he was also representing the Muslims:

> … as a Muslim, all of your conduct, all of the time, particularly if you're a public figure, is absolutely essential because in everything you do, not only are you representing your faith but also this organisation.

According to Sajjad, it was not easy for him to keep his faith separate from his profession because:

> … anything that I do, my behaviour could make somebody well-disposed towards Islam or turn somebody away from Islam. As Muslims, we have to be conscious of that. We have a very grave responsibility to God to ensure that our conduct doesn't bring our faith into disrepute.

With this in mind, Sajjad felt comfortable in practising his faith along with performing his duties as a headteacher of a state school.

Sajjad affirmed that his principles would remain the same even if all the pupils in his school were non-Muslims:

> … what you try to achieve is the very best for every single child regardless of the language, religion, ethnicity, it doesn't matter…

This statement was also confirmed by the teacher who was interviewed:

> I think first and foremost he's a headteacher, that's his role, not as a Muslim headteacher but as *a* headteacher.

Just as she considered herself a teacher first, similarly she reckoned that for Sajjad, his faith did not come before his professional role.

The pupils interviewed in the focus groups had slightly different views about Sajjad's religion and his professional role. For example, according to one pupil in the Year 6 focus group, some of the provisions in the school like selling *halal* food were made because Sajjad was a Muslim:

> If he was English, he wouldn't have done the halal food and most of the children here would have been English…

Similarly, another pupil stated that because Sajjad was a Muslim, he knew more about Islam:

> … if he wasn't a Muslim, how would he know all these facts about the Muslim faith?... he knows a lot about English [faith] but he knows more about Muslims because he's born as a Muslim.

One of the Muslim pupils later contradicted the earlier statement by saying that:

> … we had an English headteacher and the Muslims were still there… and she was a Christian and she still gave us halal food because she knows about our culture.

Most pupils agreed that Sajjad made provisions for everyone:

> … whatever religion you are and you have to pray, he still authorises a day off for that boy or girl to go and pray.

Sajjad reported that sometimes his own community (Pakistani Muslims) challenged him:

> And for some people, and it's a minority, the level of respect they would have for a non-Muslim headteacher is greater than the level of respect they have for me, unfortunately. And we do have a mentality within our own community, that in every aspect, the White host *must be* better than us.

While there were parents with whom Sajjad had a very good relationship, there were some whom he could not please at all. Another challenging situation, Sajjad described, was when Muslim parents requested him to make provisions for their children for *wudu* and prayers during *Ramadan*. Even though Sajjad acknowledged the fact that it was important to keep the parents and the pupils happy to make learning effective, this was one request he could not accept:

> … my view is that we have to have a practical common sense approach. So, if I'm going to be fair and equitable and I am going to allow any child to pray, then I have to allow all the children who want to pray, to pray. So even if half of those children wanted to pray *Zuhr* prayers and to make wudu, that's a health and safety nightmare…

Sajjad reasoned with the parents that it was not a serious issue if their children could not pray while in school as they were very young. This justification seemed plausible to the parents because Sajjad used his stance as a Muslim to help them understand.

In addition to the challenges Sajjad experienced from the parents, sometimes he felt challenged in terms of taking a decision that seemed to compromise his faith. The specific example, he used to illustrate this dilemma was when the pupils had to learn about same-sex relationships and gay marriages. Sajjad professed that in Islam, same-sex marriages were not acceptable. However, he argued that this was like drinking alcohol, having a relationship outside marriage and eating pork, which were not permissible for the Muslims. But the prohibition, Sajjad explained, was in his faith, not in the society in which they lived:

> So, I have to balance all of that…I understand that I serve a community where that's [accepting same-sex marriages] going to be very difficult for them. But equally I have to reinforce that we have a role in preparing them for that society.

Sajjad thought that this dilemma questioned his own morality. Nevertheless, he claimed that:

> I can't allow that [morality] to prevent me carry out my legal duties. And *that* is a compromise because the alternative is to walk away.

A more recent challenge faced by Sajjad was the Trojan Horse Controversy. However, Sajjad confirmed that it did not undermine his leadership 'in any way, shape or form'. This, he explained, was because his staff and governors trusted him. While the affair was actively investigated in different schools across Birmingham, Sajjad's school was rated as Outstanding on those aspects which were particularly being scrutinised in those schools. He explained that although the local authorities were aware of the controversy, they did nothing about it:

> there are a lot of people in Birmingham who need to be soul-searching about this whole TH thing. And some of the people who claim they knew nothing about it, well actually they did.

The controversy, Sajjad concluded, might have settled down but children in the TH schools had to face the consequences for a long time. While the THC raised questions about religion, and in particular about Islam, Sajjad confidently claimed that his leadership principles were like a moral compass and he derived this morality from Islam. As a Muslim headteacher, he felt obligated to be honest to his profession as well as to his religion.

4.5. HEADTEACHER LAIBA

4.5.1. About Laiba and her school

Laiba was the headteacher of a 'larger than average' primary school in West London since 2009. The largest ethnic group in the school was of Somali children followed by White Eastern European, Arab and Afghan pupils respectively. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) was proportionately high in the school.

Laiba was born and raised in London. Her parents were very open and flexible in terms of having friends from all religions and races. As a child, Laiba did not feel the need to express her identity since she never participated in any activities in which her faith identity was considered problematic. However, as an adult, she could express her Muslim identity in a confident way only when she had her own children and felt responsible for raising them in a certain way. Laiba came into the teaching profession by accident rather than by choice. The fact that she came to this school as a student motivated her to take on the headship of this school.

4.5.2. Person in profession

Laiba considered three aspects of her identity helpful in a professional role; (a) being a Muslim, (b) being a female and (c) being an Asian. Although the challenges of being a person of faith remained, Laiba did not feel that there was a conflict between her religious identity and her profession. Working as a Muslim headteacher in England, Laiba felt a sense of responsibility towards the society she was living in:

> I think wherever you live, you have a duty for not only yourself but the people you represent, to show that you are capable of being a citizen of that nation.

To mingle with the society, Laiba confessed that there were some things she had to accept and do. However, she did not do anything at the cost of her religious beliefs.

Laiba's responses in the two interviews suggested that she was a headteacher with a strong drive and motivation to do the best for her school. According to Laiba, there were various principles she employed to ensure that her school excelled in every field:

> If you have a strong set of principles, and you stick by them…it is incredible how that filters across the whole school… and if they're [principles] regularly visited, and regularly *modelled*, it becomes an expectation…

Prioritising the wellbeing of pupils in her care, Laiba talked highly of her school and mentioned the numerous achievements and accreditations which she was able to attain with the help of her staff. These awards/achievements not only reflected Laiba's actions, but also the principles that underpinned these actions. For example, Laiba prioritised the wellbeing of the children and their state of mind before engaging in any kind of learning. This led the school to win the award of Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM). According to Laiba, this was not possible without the buy-in of her staff:

> … when staff understand that [the reasons for the actions], they will have ownership of it and that filters down to everyone.

Laiba tried not to be autocratic; rather she modelled to the staff and pupils what she expected them to do. This aspect of her leadership was also experienced by teachers in the two focus groups as one of them described Laiba as, 'central to the life of the school'. Another teacher in the same focus group stated that:

> … she's very supportive and she's very inspirational as well. She does so much herself…

Teachers confirmed that children looked up to Laiba and were excited to talk to her.

Laiba was particular about setting her expectations from the pupils in the school very clearly. When she joined the school, the attendance record of some pupils was very poor. Along with a member of staff, Laiba went to these pupils' homes and asked the parents why their child was not in school. Although Laiba's action surprised some parents, it was an expectation that she had from the beginning and communicated the same to the parents:

> Sometimes parents are not happy about that. But actually you have to explain that they have a right to education…

Similarly, for behavioural issues, Laiba preferred to maintain good communication with the parents.

Another aspect of 'inclusion', according to the IQM report, was dealing with vulnerable children and families. Acknowledging the nature of vulnerability of some pupils, Laiba emphasised that she used a range of interventions. These included working with a clinical psychologist, a neurolinguistic programmer, and training all teachers to be counsellors and mentors:

> I've got about 5 or 6 different groups of interventions because if we can't engage the parents, it becomes very difficult to make things happen.

Based on an ethos which promoted Rights, Respect and Responsibility, the school was awarded the Level 1 Rights Respecting Schools Award (a Unicef UK programme that aims to put children's rights at the heart of schools in the UK) in 2014. Under the umbrella of a Rights Respecting School, Laiba explained how the school used a system called Restorative Justice to deal with behaviour issues by 'providing opportunities to the children to do their best, take responsibility for their actions and repair the harm they do'. By engaging in restorative conversations, Laiba felt that the staff and students in the school could resolve issues in a more

effective manner. To conclude, Laiba expressed her leadership principles while prioritising the wellbeing of the children in her care. These included creating an inclusive environment by introducing appropriate interventions and encouraging all members of staff to take ownership of their efforts of doing the best for the pupils.

4.5.3. Religion in Profession

Coming from a faith background, Laiba confessed that her principles and morals were grounded in her faith. However, she never experienced a conflict between her faith and her profession. This, Laiba explained, was because the underlying beliefs, morals and principles were same across religions;

> I don't force my faith upon anybody but my faith ties with everybody else's faith… the same beliefs about moral conduct, about respect for one another and humility are the fundamental principles I use on a day-to-day basis throughout my life and that's how I run the school.

Laiba emphasised that her leadership principles were governed by the three main faiths, and not by her own faith in particular. As for the source from which she derived these principles, Laiba explained that it was 'nurture and nature':

> It's part of your personality and who you believe is right and I think if you come from a strong ethical background, then that gives you an ability to be a strong leader…

In her office, Laiba displayed the *kalma* (a declaration of the Muslim faith), had placed a Bible and Torah and also had some books on the Buddhist faith. This, she considered, was important to model to her staff and children that she valued all faiths and beliefs:

> … it's by your actions, so saying and doing sometimes are very different things...

Laiba further explained that the boundaries within which she worked were drawn by her own faith, and while she did not impose her faith on anyone, she had no doubts about where her moral grounding came from.

Laiba's explained that her primary sources of guidance were her members of staff, networks and committees of which she was a member, School Improvement Partner (SIP) and various organisations such as National College of Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) and National Association of Headteachers (NAHT). However, Laiba described a few instances where she took guidance from her religion. For example, in situations where she was not sure about her judgement in dealing with issues concerning Muslim parents, she would seek advice from a religious scholar:

> … sometimes on small matters, sometimes on matters of faith, sometimes on matters of similarities and differences between the three faiths, just to get clarification…

Laiba acknowledged that in such situations, her own religious knowledge was not enough to help her take the right decision. In such cases, Laiba adhered to the basic principles of honesty and transparency:

> I think people need to be informed and people need to be clear and if there's nothing to hide, you [parents] can come in any time you like, people then feel trustworthy and comfortable.

Laiba claimed that she used her faith background to her advantage. On some occasions, she was successful in making parents understand that they could not exclude their children from certain activities (such as sex education, participating in music and singing and swimming) because they were part of the school curriculum. However, there were instances where she had to give up. Such cases, in particular, were hard to deal with and even members of staff referred them directly to Laiba. A teacher in TEL1 explained:

> …we might have children from strong Islamic backgrounds and they might resent or say that they are not allowed to do certain things. And whenever we've had these, Laiba has been incredibly supportive. She says leave it to me, I'll deal with it…

Teachers agreed that Laiba's faith played a role mostly when she had to deal with Muslim parents and their concerns:

> … it's [Laiba's faith] a benefit in the relationship with parents.

Other than this, the teachers thought that people did not really see Laiba as a *Muslim* headteacher:

> I don't think there is a perception of her as a Muslim headmistress. She's the headmistress of the whole school who happens to be a Muslim.

Laiba used her knowledge of her own faith to show humility and respect towards others. Rather than being offended by people's ignorance about her faith, she regarded such instances an opportunity to reflect on her faith:

> I think you have to be strong in your own moral beliefs and purposes for other people to be able to respect you and what you stand for…

The teachers acknowledged Laiba's openness to talk about other religions. One teacher in TEL1 said:

> I think she knows a lot about other religions. She studied the Bible and she always tells that to the Muslim children as well.

Other teachers in the focus groups also confirmed that Laiba was comfortable to have conversations with children as well as staff over matters of faith.

Pupils in the focus groups confirmed that Laiba's religion did not make much difference to the way she run the school:

> … because everyone is treated the same.

A pupil in PEL2 expressed her opinion about Laiba by saying that:

> Laiba is a fair person and she wouldn't change anything because of her religion. She cares about every child.

Thus, pupils did not experience anything different in her actions, considering the fact that she was a Muslim.

Regarding the THC, Laiba described how some elements of the controversy were questioned in the latest Ofsted inspection in January 2015:

> … and I thought, are you asking me this because I'm a Muslim head or should I get hung up on this? But I thought I'm not going to get hung up on this.

An example of these questions, Laiba described, was how the school dealt with radicalisation. The children who were questioned during this inspection were not very happy as they did not understand the reason why they were interrogated in this way. Nevertheless, Laiba asserted that the controversy did not impact her leadership.

In summary, it has been shown in this section that Laiba did not experience a conflict between her religion and her professional role. Although she confirmed that her morals and principles were grounded in her religion, she admitted that they were no different than any other religion.

4.6. HEADTEACHER MONA

4.6.1. About Mona and her school

Mona was the headteacher of an 'above-average sized' primary school in North-East London, since 2010. The school had a large majority of children who were White British, followed by Bengalis, Eastern Europeans and Pakistanis. Christianity was the largest religious affiliation group followed by Islam.

Mona was born and brought up in East London, in a largely Asian community. She came to this school as a child and at that time, she was one of the very few Asian pupils who attended this school. She experienced some racism as she was growing up and this made her question a lot of things about minorities. Mona was keen to challenge the stereotypical views that the community had for an Asian headteacher. However, she did not pre-empt the challenges and difficulties she was about to face in this school, posed by the community *and* the teachers in the school. Since the time she joined this school, 40 members of staff left which was a big staff turnover. This, Mona conceded, was because of their apprehensions about having a female Asian headteacher. However, Mona was determined to continue.

4.6.2. Person in profession

Mona faced a lot of negativity when she joined the school. She mentioned this occasionally and described how she dealt with this negativity by holding on to her principles:

> … the way people perceived me, young, Asian… I had a lot of people's perceptions about what does *she* know? What is *she* going to do? And there were a lot of people who tried to bring me down.

In the face of all these resistances, Mona derived her strength (to continue in the profession) from her principles:

> And that's [the principles] what I had to hold on to. And at that point, your faith comes in. It has to be strong. You have to be passionate. You've got to believe that God is going to give you that strength to carry on.

Mona explained that she did not give up or quit as she was confident that what she was doing was right and was in the best interest of the children. Her principles were based on her moral belief of differentiating right from wrong. Although she was convinced that she was doing the right things as a headteacher, she did not feel supported by her staff. However, after four long years of struggle, Mona felt that the new staff had taken her vision on board as she could see them take initiatives and be proactive:

> … I don't say what I don't preach. Everything I say, I do; so I walk the talk. I'm very hands-on in terms of having good manners, the way you treat people, respect, everyone is equal…

While describing the various principles used by Mona, one teacher in TEM2 described Mona as 'she leads by example'. Another teacher said that:

> She won't ask anyone in the staff to do anything she isn't prepared to do herself. And if you can't do it, she'll be the first person to say, I'll come to help you…

Some teachers in the focus groups had joined the school recently and faced difficulties in teaching and managing the children. One of the new teachers affirmed that Mona helped him in his teaching:

> I was struggling with delivering Math lessons but Mona is always open about coming in and helping me…'

Other teachers agreed that Mona was always modelling what she expected of them and this was a principle they tried to incorporate in their respective roles too.

While illustrating the examples of resistance, Mona talked about her leadership actions in a way that highlighted the challenges she faced and the strategies she used to deal with those challenges. The first resistance Mona experienced was from the staff. Initially the White teachers started the conflict, but soon the few Asian teachers in the school were demanding the same:

> … our own people [Asians] were getting just as bad. They were becoming very negative and that's really sad… but then it becomes more jealousy against the faith…

To confront such resistance, Mona ensured that she was proactive and visible all the time:

> … when I first started here, they never used to see the headteacher so I ensure that all the senior leadership, we're out in the mornings and after school, because you need to be seen to prevent gossip.

By being open and transparent, Mona reckoned that she enabled the staff to talk to her directly about anything that concerned them and vice versa. This helped her in dealing with the challenges while acting strong and determined.

At first, Mona found it difficult to challenge the demands of teachers and parents about the need for more Christian teachers. However, her determination gave her the strength to face the negativities against her. Mona strongly opposed the idea of using race and religion as an excuse for not progressing in a profession. She did not consider race and religion as key factors any headteacher would consider for promoting their staff:

> … they [headteachers] look at you and your skill set. And that's why they appoint you. They don't appoint you because of the colour of your skin…

For Mona, it was her leadership skills, qualities and her knowledge that helped her sustain herself in a leadership position.

Considering the cultural mix of the community, Mona thought that sometimes it would be beneficial if the headteacher was of the same background as the majority children in the school. She explained that while she suffered from 'instutionalised racism' where she was resisted by the staff in her school, there were several parents, Asian men in particular, who also challenged her leadership status:

> … they won't make contact with me but my deputy who's White; they'll speak to him throughout the whole meeting even though I'm the one who's leading it but they won't look at me because I'm an Asian woman…It's the way they perceive and *apney* (an Urdu word for people of your own kind) are worse.

With the same determination and an attitude of 'leading in the face of resistance', Mona regarded this prejudice of Asian men as their ignorance. She conceded that the colour and background of the headteacher made a difference depending on the links the headteacher had with the community. In her case, her ethnic background as well as her gender were seen as negative by the school and the community. Thus, by holding on to key principles such as being proactive and visible, being open and transparent and leading by example, Mona challenged the resistance and stereotypical behaviour she experienced in her leadership.

4.6.3. Religion in profession

Even though Mona described a number of challenges she faced for being an Asian female headteacher, she did not particularly come across any resistance in terms of her religion:

> … sometimes it [her religion] has worked quite well in terms of being a Muslim, you understand certain aspects, but you can also challenge certain aspects.

Mona regarded her understanding of the religion as useful in educating other people who (a) did not understand different aspects of Islam and (b) posed challenges for having a similar religious background. She related some incidents where she had to use her own knowledge of religion to challenge people's misconceptions about Islam. For example, a Muslim parent once objected on her daughter sitting next to a boy in the classroom. In this case, Mona had a conversation with the parents where she told them that:

> … you choose to live in England, you choose to send your child to a state school, I'm sorry, but part of that is your child *will* sit next to a boy in some situations.

In another situation, Mona caught a Muslim child making judgements about another child by saying that, 'God's not going to be happy with you'. Since the child was too young to understand what he said, Mona called the parents and explained to them that he might be learning such things from the mosque. A third situation, Mona elaborated, was when she heard a boy saying that, '… it's a woman's job to stay at home and do cooking'. In this case, Mona talked to the boy and gave her own example of a woman in a professional role. Lastly, Mona related incidents where parents would prohibit their children to participate in music and/or physical education (PE) on the grounds that religion (Islam) doesn't allow such things. Without compromising her principles, Mona sometimes challenged such parents, while at other times, valued their opinions:

> … we will say in a nurturing way to make them [parents] understand that there is nothing wrong but if your beliefs are that strong, then that's fine.

Using her knowledge of the religion, Mona considered it important to make the parents understand the consequences of their actions.

Mona explained that more than religion, it was the values she learnt in life which made her the leader she was. And these values, she emphasised were grounded in several things:

> … and that's [my values] part religion, part family, part experiences and challenges in life that has made me who I am and I believe in.

These values, Mona explained, were just like good manners that children needed to learn, such as empathy, honesty, being truthful, and respecting others. Religion, for Mona, was not really a source of guidance for the different roles she performed as a headteacher; rather it was a source to which she could attribute her moral values and beliefs that she acquired over time.

In terms of expressing her religion in a professional role, Mona felt that she could do it, but she did not *have to*. In her own case, the use of her religion was situation and context-specific (the situations have been described in the above paragraphs). In response to the question of whether Mona's religion had any impact on the way she led the school, all teachers in the focus groups stated that it did not. The only time teachers experienced Mona talk about her religion in front of the parents was when she was faced with a situation:

> … for example, they [parents] may start to talk to her about what *they* believe for their child is right and say that my child shouldn't be involved in this. And she's [Mona] very knowledgeable about her religion, so she will say that actually I'm a Muslim and I know that this is not what the child is entitled to do, so that's the only time I've ever heard her bringing this [her religion] up in school…

Another teacher thought that Mona did not allow her religion to come into conflict with her professional role:

> I don't think she even lets that [religion and profession] cross over. Religion aside and job aside, they are two things for her. She's got a very good understanding of religion and faith and I don't think she lets them mix.

A teacher in TEM1 confirmed the fact that Mona used her religion to her benefit:

> … maybe this being such a diverse school… then obviously you would have to be more aware of how to handle different situations and work with different families.

Considering the fact that most of the situations the teachers referred to in their conversation involved Muslim parents, Mona's ethnic and faith background (as it matched with the background of the parents) appeared to be beneficial for her.

Regarding the THC, Mona explained that the recent Ofsted inspection (2014) had some elements which were interrogated because of the controversy. For example, the Ofsted inspectors asked her how the school monitored religious sessions and visitors and how they ensured that children in the school were not being radicalised. In response to such interrogations, Mona argued with the inspectors that she was very open and communicative with the children:

> … we talk to them [children] and we talk to the people we are dealing with to cover whichever topic and we ensure that that's [radicalisation] not going on.

To conclude, Mona confirmed that her understanding of the religion proved beneficial in terms of explaining certain aspects of Islam which people did not understand and also to deal with challenges posed by parents coming from a similar religious background.

PART II

FINDINGS

4.7. INTRODUCTION

This part aims to synthesise the findings of the five Muslim headteachers in England (MHIE). While doing so, I have engaged in an 'interpretive analysis' which includes my interpretation of what the headteachers said and incorporates a comparison of the four data sets, that is accounts of the headteachers, teachers and pupils and documentary data of the respective schools. Based on the narrative case studies presented in Part I, in this section, I will examine how principles, actions and guidance interacted with one another and with various other contextual factors to influence the headteachers in carrying out their professional roles. I have synthesised the narratives of the five headteachers under the two broad themes, (a) Person in profession and (b) Religion in profession. While these themes run through the different data sets, there are others which emerged from the data over and above the research questions. These themes will be highlighted as and when relevant. It is important to note here that I will engage with the relevant literature in more detail in the comparative chapter (see Chapter 6) where I will bring together the interpretive analyses of MHIE and MHIP. Therefore, in this interpretive analysis of the MHIE, my engagement with literature will be very light.

4.8. PERSON IN PROFESSION

The section 'Person in Profession', in the narrative case studies, was written in a way that it highlighted the self-understanding of the headteachers of their role and their person. The reason

for selecting the title 'Person in Profession' was to understand how the headteachers perceived their professional actions as *Muslim* headteachers and the underlying principles and sources of guidance. It was evident from the narrative reports that each headteacher described him/herself in a different way, and this reflected the differences in their individual perceptions. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the relationship between the principles, actions and guidance as understood and described by the MHIE.

While exploring the principles the MHIE used in their leadership role, I identified a variety of secular discourses from their responses, some of which reflected principles, such as diversity, multiculturalism, equality, integration, harmonious community, respect, dignity, compassion, empathy, fairness, honesty integrity and humanity. These principles, as understood by the MHIE, were articulated both in terms of personal and professional values. However, looking at the common language used by the MHIE, it seemed as if they were mindful of expressing themselves in a certain way owing to what was expected of them from their leadership role. A review of the school policy documents and Ofsted reports showed a lot of similarities between how these headteachers expressed themselves and the content of the guidance documents.

Speaking of guidance documents, the common discourses used by all MHIE had several parallels with the inspection and evaluation criteria described by Ofsted. For example, the School Inspection Handbook (2015) outlined the legal requirements, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005, for Ofsted inspectors when making judgements about a school. These criteria, as I found, were quite similar to the dominant language used by the headteachers to describe their principles, for example discourses of diversity, equality, integration and harmonious community. However, no evidence was provided by any of the MHIE where they explicitly associated their principles with the evaluation criteria. Similarly, various school policy documents (such as

Behaviour for Learning policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, Personal Social Moral and Health Education policy, etc.) were designed in line with the legal requirements set out by the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted. Again, the headteachers' knowledge of the principles resonated with the policy documents, but the similarity did not turn up in their responses. Finally, the National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers (2015), developed by the DfE, defined certain standards of 'best practice'.

The MHIE, regardless of their length of service, were expected to use these standards in their individual contexts (DfE, 2015). They were divided into four domains, namely (a) Qualities and knowledge, (b) Pupils and staff, (c) Systems and process and (d) The self-improving school system (DfE, 2015). It was evident from the headteachers' responses that they used these standards to shape their practice, however, they did not acknowledge this source of guidance for the formation of their principles. Therefore, it is safe to suggest that the guidance from Ofsted and other policy documents was assimilated by the MHIE in a way that they used it as part of their everyday speech and it was this guidance that became the headteachers' own principles.

Assimilating the language of their principles, from various documents, was an expectation from the headteachers' professional role even though they did not express it that way. The professional expectations thus became the guidance that was internalised by all five MHIE as normative (Bryan and Revell, 2011b). In addition to this, there were other types of expectations, which these headteachers were obliged to fulfil and which influenced the way they talked about and used their principles. For example, expectations from parents, pupils, staff, society and the headteachers' own religion. These expectations represented the contexts which shaped the headteachers' perception of principles and the actions in which these principles were manifested. Although the secular language, representing their principles, was the same for all five MHIE,

there were subtle nuances resulting from these contextual factors, which made each headteacher act differently. For example, Ahmad's actions and the underlying principles revolved around the community (pupils and their parents) the school served. In particular, he formed principles for dealing with challenges from Asian Muslim parents, especially Pakistanis. Khalid's responses, on the other hand, suggested that he was very conscious of the THC, because of which he adopted the school values as his own principles.

Among the five headteachers, Sajjad was the only one who was confident about attributing his principles to his religion. He expressed a sense of accountability towards his religion as well the country in which he lived. However, there were instances where he had to separate religion from culture to convince parents to comply with the National Curriculum. Examples of such instances, as cited in Sajjad's narrative report, included convincing Muslim parents about educating their children for sex education and same-sex relationships. Sajjad needed to explain to these parents that the prohibition was in Islam, but not in the society in which they lived. Therefore, he had to abide by the law even though it made him compromise his religious beliefs on these issues.

Although gender was not the particular focus of the interviews, it became evident that the two female headteachers in London experienced the above-mentioned contextual factors in a slightly different way. Mona, in particular, faced resistance in her school after she assumed the role of a headteacher. While the staff were not happy with an Asian Muslim headteacher, the parents (Asian fathers) ignored her position in the leadership hierarchy owing to her gender. Consequently, she formed principles that helped her safeguard her leadership as well as gender position. For example, she became proactive and visible to her staff to encourage them to openly

communicate with her. Similarly, she resisted the marginalisation by Asian parents by acting strong and determined.

Similar to Mona, Laiba also experienced some stereotypical viewpoints of people in relation to her gender. Even though these viewpoints did not pose any threat to her professional role, her stance on dealing with them was through prioritising her professional responsibilities over her personal values. This, she felt, was required to counter the perception that a female could/should not do certain things. Laiba's responses reflected a sense of determination and commitment, traits which made her strive to be the best in everything she did as a headteacher.

The headteachers' religion also played a critical role in the formation of principles and articulation of their leadership actions. As the responses suggest, their religious identity was significantly important to them in influencing the way they dealt with a situation. In most cases, religion appeared to be interwoven with their leadership actions. Therefore, it is crucial to observe the extent to which religion complemented and/or informed the dealings of the MHIE with people (teachers, pupils and parents) who shared a similar ethnic and religious background. The three schools in West Midlands had a large majority of Asian Muslim pupils, Pakistanis in particular. The parents of these pupils expected the selected MHIE to understand their needs and issues as a Pakistani Muslim such as prohibiting their children from certain activities, requesting for special provisions in terms of prayers and fasting, and allowing their children to opt out of sex education. Although all MHIE ensured the accommodation of these needs, as professionals they could not compromise their leadership responsibilities for their religion.

There was one instance, the THC, where religion, as a contextual factor, proved to be controversial in terms of challenging the leadership position of the MHIE. This controversy

affected the headteachers in Birmingham more than their counterparts in London. Owing to the sensitive nature of the controversy, I was cautious to inquire about its likely impact on the headteachers' leadership position. However, in the second phase interviews, the MHIE felt confident to talk about it. All three Birmingham schools had Ofsted inspections following the controversy. Although these headteachers were quite concerned about how the controversy affected the general perception of Muslim professionals, they successfully managed to deal with the apprehensions and allegations of the DfE, Ofsted and media by taking a professional stance. The three MHIE unanimously claimed that the THC did not undermine their leadership. This claim could be attributed to the headteachers' understanding that they were in a political position where they were not allowed to say certain things in certain ways. But it is also possible that they were undaunted by the whole controversy. Whatever the reason, the headteachers' reaction to the THC was something I did not investigate in the interviews since the headteachers were not comfortable to talk about it. Hence, I cannot make a definitive claim about its impact.

The two female headteachers in London faced somewhat similar situations in terms of fulfilling the expectations of Asian Muslim parents. However, they used their religion in a different way as compared to the three headteachers in Birmingham. For example, Laiba used her religion to her advantage while addressing the challenges posed by Asian Muslim parents. Considering the multicultural environment in her school, she insisted on using the common values (across all religions) rather than Islamic values. Teachers in Laiba's school confirmed that her religion was beneficial in developing a relationship with Asian Muslim parents. Nevertheless, they explained, religion was an aspect of her personality which supported her in dealing with Asian Muslim parents only; other parents saw her as a headteacher who 'happened to be a Muslim'.

Mona, on the other hand, perceived that her religious identity did not necessarily play out as a positive factor in relation with the community. Even though the population of Asian Muslim pupils in her school was small as compared to other schools, some of the parents, fathers in particular, resisted acknowledging her authority as a headteacher. This resistance, as mentioned earlier, came from their denial to accept a woman in a leadership role. There were instances where, in addition to Muslim fathers, Mona experienced how Muslim pupils also disagreed with the idea of a working Muslim woman. This perception of the children could be attributed to their experiences at home, where parents justified the restrictions on the working of women, with their interpretation of the teachings of Islam. However, apart from religion, the marginalisation of women is also related to the social practices within a given culture. Since Muslims come from diverse backgrounds (cultures, races, ethnicities and languages), the way gender is perceived varies from one Muslim community to another (Shah, 2016a). In Mona's case, she experienced the discrimination based on gender from her own community (Asian Muslims). Therefore, having the same cultural and religious background as some of the pupils, was not seen by Mona as helpful owing to the parents' stereotypical views of Muslim women in professional roles.

In the description of the headteachers' principles so far, I have covered the source from which they derived their principles, and explained how they assimilated the language from guidance documents and expressed it as their own principles. While discussing the sources, and explaining the relationship between guidance and principles, it became clear that the principles were almost always manifested in some actions. Teachers and pupils in all five schools confirmed the secular discourses used by the MHIE to describe their leadership principles. However, the way they linked these discourses with the headteachers' actions varied across the schools. In most cases, teachers and pupils confirmed that the headteachers' principles matched with their actions.

Nevertheless, there were some examples where either teachers or pupils experienced that the headteachers' principles did not manifest themselves in their actions. For example, teachers in Ahmad's school expressed their concerns about his visibility. They acknowledged the principles he established for the welfare of the school, however, they did not see him often enough to be able to confirm whether his principles were reflected in his actions. Furthermore, they attributed his less frequent appearance to pupils' behavioural issues, which created problems especially for new teachers.

The aspect of visibility was voiced by pupils in Khalid's school as well. On the one hand, pupils in both focus groups agreed that Khalid had assimilated the school's values as his own principles. But on the other hand, the principle of 'aspiration' was compromised because the pupils did not see him very frequently. They acknowledged his achievements as a headteacher, especially his title of OBE; however, to be inspired by him, the pupils wanted to see him more frequently. Therefore, his minimum contact with pupils affected his relationship with them and created a sense of dissatisfaction in them. Additionally, pupils complained about the use of cameras leading to lack of 'respect'. These cameras, pupils explained, were used to keep a check for any misbehaviour. However, none of the pupils welcomed this strategy as they felt embarrassed when they heard their names being called out over the speaker. This further caused mistrust and distancing between Khalid and his pupils.

Teachers in Khalid's school, on the other hand, had very positive experiences of his leadership. The principle of 'aspiration' was perceived by the teachers in a very different way. Although Khalid linked it to the aspirations of the pupils in his school, teachers in the focus groups associated it with the internal promotions they received. Thus, the pupils' and teachers' experiences of Khalid's principles and actions were significantly different from one another.

Apart from these examples, the responses of teachers and pupils in all schools mostly confirmed what the headteachers said and what they did. The slightly atypical responses suggest that even though the headteachers performed their roles in accordance with the professional standards, there could be gaps between the execution of their leadership actions and the teachers' and pupils' perceptions of them.

To conclude, all five MHIE were conscious of fulfilling the expectations of their profession to the extent that they prioritised profession over religion. Even though they attributed some of the principles to their own religion, they were mindful about highlighting the common things across all religions. It is for this reason, that principles drawn from their own religion were quite similar to their professional principles. Where the two (religious and professional) were different, they did not create any tension in the headteachers' carrying out of their professional role.

4.9. RELIGION IN PROFESSION

In the previous section, I discussed religion as a contextual factor since it appeared interwoven with the headteachers' actions, especially in their dealings with Asian Muslim parents and pupils. In addition to this, several other contextual elements of religion emerged from the data over and above the research questions, such as:

a) Expression of religion

b) Discourse of religion

c) Religion and culture

4.9.1. Expression of religion

The narrative case studies indicated that all five MHIE were aware that they could only express their religion in a certain way. This expression was reflected in the headteachers' responses in two ways: (a) denying that religion had any influence on their leadership principles and actions and (b) marginalising their faith position to act in a 'politically correct' way. Although none of the five MHIE regarded the relationship between their religious identity and leadership role as problematic, the way they chose to express their religion indicated that they tried to keep their personal faith separate from their profession. Except for Sajjad, who did not like to segregate his personal faith from profession, all other headteachers emphasised 'profession' more than 'religion'. They understood the expectations of the profession and abided by them. Sajjad too was mindful about prioritising profession over religion. Although he regarded his profession as a calling from Allah, he made a deliberate effort not to let his faith compromise his professional duties as a headteacher.

While talking about their religion, the MHIE were very aware of the cultural and religious mix of staff and pupils in their schools. It was this awareness which kept them from overtly expressing their religion. Having said that, all five MHIE had good knowledge of the various aspects of Islam and used this knowledge when needed. For example, when dealing with challenges posed by Muslim parents, the shared identity, both ethnic and religious, proved helpful for the headteachers. This was also acknowledged by teachers and pupils in their schools. However, the shared identity was not always helpful. Almost all headteachers faced a dilemma when Muslim parents expected them to understand their concerns and allow them to go against the National Curriculum and statutory guidelines. Therefore, the headteachers' religion became a double-edged sword. That is, it complemented the carrying out of the headteachers' professional roles in

individual contexts, but at the same time, it also posed a threat to the professional delivery of their duties as headteachers.

Teachers and pupils, in the selected schools, had quite strong views about the headteachers' expression of religion. According to them, it was 'not allowed' to talk about religion in a public institution. Therefore, the fact that these headteachers identified themselves as Muslims did not give them the freedom to openly express their religion and/or religious views. Both teachers and pupils were very clear in their expectations from the headteachers for acting professionally rather than religiously. Keeping these expectations in perspective, the responses of the MHIE reflect that the way they perceived religion and its expression in a professional role, could not be any different from what the department, the state, the teachers, pupils and parents expected of them.

4.9.2. Discourse of religion

In this section, I will discuss and analyse the discourse of religion used by the MHIE. The headteachers, as it appears, were not open about expressing their religion in a leadership role. This attitude was reflected in instances when the MHIE related any Islamic value or principle to those of other religions. This is because they were aware of the multicultural environment in their schools. By emphasising the moral values, which were common to all religions, the MHIE seemed to show respect to the different cultures and religions that existed in their schools. Hence, the lack of inclination towards any one particular faith, by using a "common-to-all-religions" discourse, allowed the *Muslim* identity of the headteachers to co-exist with their *professional* identity.

Furthermore, the "common-to-all-religions" discourse aligned with the rich cultural, religious and ethnic diversity observed in all five schools. The specific contextual examples given by the MHIE represented their religion as more of an identity signifier than a personal faith. There could be several possible explanations for this. One plausible reason could be that they were part of a society where Islam was not the dominant religion. Therefore, as professionals, they were bound to observe the norms of the society. Their preference to identify themselves as Muslims through their association with Muslim parents and family upbringing was proof that they were not comfortable in saying what they learnt from their religion. Nevertheless, they mentioned in their narratives the practising elements of Islam, such as the obligatory rituals. The fact that the selected MHIE observed the rituals, daily prayers in particular (four of the five MHIE expressed this fact indirectly), implies that religion did have a place in their lives. However, the discourse they used for their religion implied that that they did not want to be explicit about the extent to which their religion guided them in a professional role. Since the personal and professional were so closely intertwined, the need to comply with state regulations made it difficult to understand whether the headteachers used this discourse, because they *had to* or because they *believed* it was *the right thing to do* [The emphasis in italics is my own].

4.9.3. Religion and culture

The "common-to-all-religions" discourse occasionally caused a conflict between the selected headteachers' profession and their religion. This conflict compelled them to believe that religion and culture were two separate things. In order to ensure that they were conforming to the educational norms in terms of following the National Curriculum, the MHIE made a strategic distinction between religion and culture. While doing so, they convinced themselves, and others around them, that they were not doing anything wrong religiously.

Illustrating the boundaries drawn by the MHIE between religion and culture, two of the five MHIE (Khalid and Sajjad) used examples of teaching pupils about sex education, as a statutory requirement, and educating pupils about LGBT issues. While the former did not directly challenge the headteachers' religion, it was the latter which made them question how to act and what to do. In particular, the reaction of the parents regarding the teaching of LGBT issues in schools brought them to a dilemma, i.e. should they allow Muslim pupils to opt out of such education or should they treat them just the same? In particular there was a lot of criticism by Muslim parents, who even after living in the UK for generations, found it hard to integrate with the British society. As a result, both headteachers faced a difficulty in keeping a balance between their personal and professional values. Since there was little or no liberty to compromise the professional values, the headteachers took a strategic decision to classify those aspects of the National Curriculum which were not consistent with Islam, as culture. This way, they assured themselves that they were not compromising or abandoning their religion and religious values.

By making a definite distinction between culture and religion, the headteachers justified their acceptance of the norms and discourses about sexuality on the pretext that they were educating and informing the pupils about these things and not changing their perceptions about Islam. Sajjad's views endorsed this justification as he believed that the society which allowed same-sex marriages, eating pork and drinking alcohol *simultaneously* allowed them to practise their religion freely. Although the strategy of the MHIE to differentiate between religion and culture was a way of dealing with the tensions between the societal culture in which they lived and the institutions in which they worked, the boundaries between the two are still contested. That the headteachers accepted those aspects of Islam which did not conflict with the Western educational context and declared others as culture was an evidence of this contestation. Therefore, on the one hand, the headteachers' use of the secular discourses was a response to

the secular and plural culture that prevailed in the society. But on the other hand, differentiating between elements of culture and religion was considered important by the MHIE to portray themselves as complying with both societal culture as well as the religious culture they belonged to as Muslims.

4.10. SUMMARY

The analysis of the two themes revealed that the leadership principles of the MHIE were almost always manifested in some actions. The language of the principles indicated that they were mostly derived from statutory guidance (in the form of policy documents and standards); however, this was not explicitly mentioned by any headteacher. The actions of the MHIE were therefore informed by principles which were mostly derived from their profession.

The relationship between principles, actions and guidance was also analysed in light of the headteachers' religion. While the headteachers were not explicit in associating their leadership principles with their religion, they expressed them in a way that they did not appear as Islamic leadership principles only, but principles that were common to all religions.

The expression and discourse of religion used by the headteachers reflected the multicultural environment in their schools as well as pointed towards the contested place of religion in the public sphere in England. As for the influence of the headteachers' religion on their leadership actions, there was no apparent conflict between their religion and profession.

Finally, the understanding of the headteachers' principles, actions and guidance was further developed by various factors comprising individual, institutional and national context. While

some factors were investigated during the interviews, there were others which emerged from the data, such as (a) the Trojan Horse controversy, (b) the headteachers' awareness of the professional expectations and (c) personal motivation of the headteachers which influenced the way they felt about expressing the religious foundations of their principles and which consequently made each headteacher unique

All the above-mentioned factors will be discussed in further detail in the comparative chapter (Chapter 6) while relating them to relevant theory and literature.

CHAPTER 5

NARRATIVE CASE STUDIES OF MUSLIM HEADTEACHERS IN PAKISTAN

PART I

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter comprises two parts. In Part I, I present the five narrative case studies of the Muslim headteachers in Pakistan (MHIP) and in Part II, I synthesise the findings of the five case studies. For each of the case studies, I have foregrounded the data as I want the data to speak at this point and the interpretation will follow. Therefore, all direct quotations from the respondents will appear in Part I. With regards to data organisation, the same rationale has been applied as explained in Chapter 4 (see Page 121)

The varying depth and breadth of the narrative case studies implies that each Muslim headteacher was a unique individual, who had a different perception and interpretation of religion in a professional role. The thematic presentation of the findings also includes the teachers' and pupils' perspectives. The five MHIP will be referred to by pseudonyms (see Appendix K). The acronyms used for teachers and pupils in the respective focus groups in each school, along with the composition of each group are given in Appendix P. Since the focus of this study was to understand the perception and interpretation of Muslim headteachers' religion in their professional role, the selection of the schools was not of prime concern. However, the review of literature emphasised the importance of context in which the headteachers worked. Therefore, some basic demographic facts about the five MHIP and the schools in which they were working is provided in Appendix O.

Although the narrative case studies will highlight the individual accounts of the five headteachers regarding their religion and professional role, there were some common facts about the schools in which the MHIP were working. For example,

a) Since all five schools were selected from the Punjab province, they followed the rules and regulations set by the School Education Department (SED) of the Government of Punjab.

b) Although located in different parts of (urban) Lahore, the students attending these schools mostly belonged to poor socio-economic class of the society who were living at, or below the poverty line (Pakistan's poverty line is about 2259.4 rupees 17 per adult equivalent per month, which is roughly equivalent to £17 per month according to the current currency exchange rate). The parents of these children, as described by the headteachers, were either working as a rickshaw driver, a domestic guard, a cook, or a street vendor.

While describing the prescriptive nature of statutory guidance, all five headteachers mentioned the regulations imposed by the SED regarding 'Dengue' (a fever caused by a special mosquito bite, which if not treated on time, can prove to be fatal) and 'Polio eradication' campaigns. Considering them 'non-educational' activities, the headteachers expressed their demotivation resulting from these regulations as they affected their leadership principles and actions.

5.2. HEADTEACHER MALIK

5.2.1. Person in profession

Malik described himself as a religious person associated with a religious family. He regarded his beard as a sign of his religiosity. Talking about the extent to which his personal beliefs influenced his leadership, Malik explained an event which changed his views about life permanently. The event was the sudden death of his infant son:

> … when my son died, that was one thing that transformed me… to this day I think that there was one thing that came to my mind when I was traveling back after hearing the news; that this child's *amaalnama* [book of deeds] hadn't opened and he has left, and if it was my turn instead, what would *I* have answered?

When probed about the nature of this impact, Malik confessed that it made him more God-fearing while consciously following the teachings of the Qur'an and Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Following his son's death, Malik considered himself responsible and accountable for the success of his students in two ways:

> … one that when they appear in front of their Lord on the Day of Judgement, they are successful… And secondly, I know that worldly success is also important. So, I wish that my children [students] attain grades that help them compete outside.

Thus, Malik directed all his efforts and resources to help the students in his school achieve both types of success; worldly as well as religious. Taking this further, Malik explained that in the absence of a state-defined vision for the school, he considered this aspiration for his students as his personal vision:

> … on a personal level, I want to make this institute where students leave in a manner that not only they are religiously strong that they can make Allah happy, but are also successful in this world such that they can lead it.

A vision derived from his religious beliefs, Malik was confident that it was reflected in the school in terms of improved discipline and grades.

Malik made frequent reference to his religion as well the statutory guidance he followed in carrying out his leadership responsibilities. He derived his principles from both religious and professional (statutory guidance) sources. However he attributed most of his principles to his faith:

> … for me the biggest source is the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). I have read in a lot of books that the Prophet (PBUH) was a *sipaa salaar* [Chief of the army], and about the different aspects of his personality.

Malik explained that there were some principles, which were based on his personal beliefs. Explaining the relationship between his personal beliefs and actions, Malik stated that:

> your personal beliefs are affecting all your habits.

However, Malik argued, there were matters in the everyday running of the school which were not associated with religion. In such instances, he admitted that religion was not really significant as they were 'daily routine matters'.

Malik described a range of actions, which were based on different principles. For example, he was motivated by his role as a headteacher as he felt responsible for changing the lives of the students in his school:

> … even if one child listens to my advice and changes for the better, maybe my life in the hereafter will be better.

Owing to the poverty level of the students, Malik explained that most of them did not consider education important. They preferred to work at low wages and earn a living for their families instead. Hence, as a prerequisite for improving their lives, it was important to retain these

students in the school. This, Malik explained, was done by motivating the students to attend school on a regular basis and helping them realise the benefits of education.

On the one hand, Malik expressed his sense of responsibility and accountability to improve the lives of all students. But on the other hand, as a Muslim headteacher leading a school in a Muslim majority area, Malik emphasised that he was accountable for making Muslim students, even better Muslims:

> … my responsibility is… to make a Muslim a better Muslim. If I can instill something more in him [values], I should do that.

However, Malik confirmed that he did not impose anything on the Christian students:

> there is thing in the Qur'an, *la ikraha fid deen* ['there is no compulsion in religion': The Qur'an, Chapter 2: Verse 256]. So, it is not my task to tell them to *change* their religion. I have some personal values too. And even if I am not talking about those values, they are speaking on their own. So, whether there is a Muslim sitting in front, or a non- Muslim, it is the same.

Malik admitted that he felt a natural bond with the Muslim students since he himself was a Muslim. Apart from that, he maintained that his efforts for improving the life of the students were sincere and impartial and both Muslims and Christians would benefit from them.

Malik showed empathy for his staff and students in different ways. For example, he tried to be kind while dealing with staff and students in his school:

> … and this kindness comes from my personal belief. So, personal beliefs do have an effect.

Being kind to people and showing a certain level of tolerance, according to Malik, helped in getting a task done easily. Giving an example of a situation, Malik described how he used kindness and tolerance to help a Christian sweeper get rid of his addiction to alcohol, especially

when in school. In this situation, Malik's primary concern was to safeguard his institution. Therefore, rather than being harsh, Malik dealt with the sweeper in a kind way to ensure that school rules were respected.

Malik tried to support his students as best as possible:

> My relationship with my students is very affectionate … I try to pay for the fees of a poor child and provide him with uniform.

While facilitating the students in this way, Malik sometimes tried to involve his staff as well by motivating them to help the needy students, as this was an act of goodness, for which they would earn reward from Allah.

Malik assured his members of staff of his help and guidance. This aspect of Malik's leadership was also experienced by the teachers in his school. One teacher in TPM1 acknowledged that although they (teachers) were Malik's subordinates, they were sometimes given relaxation in following rules and regulations. Another teacher in TPM2 described Malik's role in the school as a captain of a team:

> … he has the sportsman spirit. He knows the requirements of the students and he also knows the abilities of teachers... and helps them to use these abilities to produce good results.

Other teachers in the focus groups agreed that Malik tried to create an environment of love and respect for everyone.

> … our headteacher is more of a counsellor than a leader…

For carrying out his professional responsibilities, Malik considered himself as an 'implementer' of state policies:

> … whatever instructions we are getting from the department [Punjab Education Department, PED], from the District Education Officer (DEO), so that is a permanent source. Whatever they say has to be implemented. I am the person to implement.

In addition to state policies, Malik sought guidance from his peers on matters which needed some clarity.

According to Malik, the statutory guidance in government schools put a lot of pressure on him. For example, the SED, Government of Punjab (GoP), had set a target for secondary/higher secondary schools to ensure that every child till the age of 16 should attend school. This, Malik argued, was difficult since many students left school half way through to work. In such instances, Malik was faced with a dilemma because (a) he could not refuse to take the student and (b) he could not guarantee that the student would come up to the required standards:

> … If you demand both things together [admission and quality], it won't be possible.

Malik confessed that such unreasonable expectations of the education department demotivated him as the manner in which the objectives were *forced* upon the headteachers, made him feel like he was compromising his principle of improving the lives of students.

Malik's inability to use his principles in the way he wanted to was also noticed by the teachers in his school. One teacher in TPM2 expressed that the principles established by Malik were not his. Instead he was just there to guide them how to follow the rules set out in policy documents like *Dastoor-ul-amal*, and other administrative rules set by the government:

> … whether it is me, the headteacher, or the DEO, we are all reflectors! The policy comes from the top… We then have to reflect the policy in our classrooms.

Just like the headteacher, the teachers also felt duty-bound to follow the rules. In conclusion, the principles Malik was abiding by were empathy, kindness, respect and improving the lives of the students.

5.2.2. Religion in profession

According to Malik, '… my religion and professional role go parallel'. Although Malik took guidance from state policies for carrying out his leadership role, the 'real guidance', for him came from religion:

> … why would I become honest? If you want to get it [benefit] in this world, then just rob, but if you want to get it in the hereafter, then follow Him [Allah] who has informed you about the hereafter… then, where did we take guidance from? Religion, of course.

Malik explained that religion provided the basis for his morals:

> … the farther you are from religion, the weaker will be your morals.

Malik asserted that the role of religion in strengthening one's personality was not only true for Muslims; *every* religion, be it Islam or Christianity, was responsible for the moral training of their followers.

According to Malik, religion was not very significant while he carried out his leadership responsibilities. However, he considered his 'personal religiosity' important in contributing to his personal beliefs and values. These personal beliefs and values then influenced the principles that underpinned his leadership actions. For example, he regarded the teaching profession as 'prophetic' (profession of the Prophet Mohammad, PBUH). Owing to his extensive reading of the Qur'an and *Hadith*, Malik tried to conduct his leadership role in accordance with Islam. This

sense of responsibility led to the formation of the principle of improving the lives of the students. Malik encouraged his teachers to be honest and dedicated to their profession so they could instill the same values in their students:

> … only if they [teachers] are like that [honest and hardworking], the students will follow them…So I try that whatever I'm saying is also reflected in my actions.

Malik thought that leading by example had a greater impact on both staff and students.

Malik explained that the [Islamic] environment in which he lived influenced his everyday life and consequently his actions as a headteacher:

> …we are also part of it [the national culture] and hence, the impact is obvious.

However, Malik narrated an incident in which he experienced a conflict between his religion and his professional role. The incident, Malik described, was when the Chief Minister of Punjab ordered him to take members of staff for a cricket match on the 28th of *Ramadan*. Malik was faced with the dilemma as he had to convince his staff to leave their *ibaadat* (remembrance of Allah) and go for the match instead:

> … you can see that as a representative of the department, my job was to transport all those 50 people to that match; but my deen was telling me "no, tell them to go and pray *taraweeh* (additional prayers in preparation of the fast) in the mosque". What to do in this case?

As a compromise, Malik conducted the night prayer and *taraweeh* in the school with his staff, after which they all went to the stadium for the cricket match.

Faced with such conflicts, Malik emphasised the importance of personal beliefs when taking and executing decisions. Although he confirmed that such situations were not very frequent, they made him feel suppressed whenever they occurred:

> … they make me think that either I leave the profession or listen to the authorities. But I see whether the conflict questions my religion and if that is not the case, I continue with the profession. But if it does question my religion, I feel it is better that I leave the profession.

Since the situations did not affect his educational activities in the school, Malik managed them with some compromises, such as praying early or late, to fulfil his professional responsibilities. This flexibility is an inherent characteristic of Islam, where Muslims are provided with ease in the act of submission e.g. shortening the prayers or adjusting the prayer time while travelling or when faced with paucity of time.

Regarding the place of religion in public institutions in the country, Malik stated that since Islam was the official religion and Muslims were in majority in the schools and elsewhere, the instructions passed from the government and the Education Department were inclined towards Muslims. This was evident from the way the morning assemblies were designed, following state regulations, as well as the dominance of Islamic content in the visual displays (see Appendix Q). However, for the visual displays, Malik explained that his personal religiosity also influenced the content that was displayed. When probed whether a Christian headteacher would display anything different, Malik confessed that he would not:

> … since the majority students and teachers in these schools are Muslims, the element of Islam is dominant in these displays. They [Christian headteachers] might not have an association with Islam, but they are not enemies of Islam either.

Thus, according to Malik, Christian headteachers also felt obliged to follow state guidance in catering to the beliefs of the Muslim majority students and teachers.

In curriculum matters, the teachers explained, they would openly discuss the differences in the religious beliefs with the students:

> We tell them [Christian students] that this is your belief and we won't ask you to go against it. But we are explaining according to the book [syllabus]. This is what we believe according to the Qur'an but we don't ask you to change your belief; whatever you like…, we accept and respect that.

The teachers further stated that due to the Islamic content of the syllabus (particularly Islamiat), Christian students asked a lot of questions which they (teachers) had to clarify to avoid any conflicts. The question about religious minorities was asked to find out what provisions were made by Malik to accommodate them in the school. However, the teachers' experiences in the classrooms suggested that the curriculum being taught in public schools contained such content which made the Christian students think about the differences between Muslim and Christian beliefs. The teachers tried to explain these differences without imposing their own religious beliefs on them.

Malik explained that an alternative subject to Islamiat, called Ethics, was offered to Christian minority students. This subject was designed for all non-Muslim students. However, in his school, the only non-Muslim students were Christians. Talking about the content of this subject, Malik argued that the textbook contained universal ethics:

> … these ethics are not based on any one particular faith; they are all general things.

Malik asserted that if Islam prohibited its followers from stealing or lying, so did all other religions. He emphasised that the option of studying Ethics was given to the Christian students but there was no compulsion for them to study it.

Apart from Ethics, Malik acknowledged that there were no specific provisions made for Christian students in his school:

> … as for their religious needs, previously we had some Christian staff, but not anymore.

Recognising that the 'religious needs' of Christian students were not fulfilled, Malik explained that:

> for every minority, their needs are a bit different… here in this school, they have two types of needs: (a) educational needs and (b) religious needs. The educational needs are met in the same way for all students. But their religious needs are not catered for. This is due partly to the fact that (a) the headteacher as well as teachers are not equipped with the relevant knowledge of other religions, (b) headteacher feels that if h/she addresses these needs, it will be contradicting their own faith and beliefs, and (c) minority students themselves do not express these needs openly.

Of the three reasons, the third one was most common. Malik stated that since the Christian students did not express their needs openly, it was left to him to ask them and satisfy them as best as he could.

All teachers and students in the focus groups knew that Malik was a Muslim. However, some of the students and teachers confused 'religion' for 'sect'. Once clarified, the teachers confirmed that Malik did not talk much about his religion. One teacher confessed that:

> … we neither discuss religion amongst ourselves nor do we discuss it with our headteacher.

Another teacher described the impact of the headteacher's religion in the following way:

> … if you look at his morals, it does influence how he runs the school. Like there is *noor* [light] on a Muslim's face and you can see it by just looking at his face… there is a difference in the way he talks and people learn when they see him.

One of the teachers acknowledged the impact of Malik's religion, but did not consider it important:

> … it would have a very small impact. For example, since the break time and *Zuhr* prayers coincide, we try to ring the bell five minutes late. A Muslim headteacher will take care of such things…

Another teacher thought that the school would not have run differently if the headteacher was of any other religion:

> Even if the headteacher is a non-Muslim, he would never oppose the religion of others and neither he should. So, it doesn't make any difference.

The teachers agreed that the religion (or sect) of students and teachers was never discussed, therefore the rules were the same for both Christian and Muslim students.

The students had a slightly different perception about Malik's religion; its expression and its significance. Acknowledging that his religion influenced the way he led the school, a student in SPM1 stated that:

> … it [religion] does make a difference because if there is anything being discussed in the school which is going against the religion [Islam], he stops that.

Other students in SPM1 did not agree. According to one student:

> Anything that happens in the school, like fights and arguments, or anything else, he doesn't bring in his religion. He does all the things for the school, not for his religious inclination.

As for making provisions for non-Muslim students, a Christian student in the group remarked that:

> … as far as I know, he [Malik] doesn't differentiate between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Another Christian student acknowledged that for their special occasions, Malik allowed them to take holidays:

> He must do this as there are other minorities living amongst us and they have the same right. Even *Quaid-e-Azam* said, "give them [minorities] security".

Other Christian students in this group explained that when Malik told the students about the importance of cleanliness and discipline from an Islamic perspective, he would involve the Christian students to affirm that the same was true for them.

In summary, Malik regarded his personal religiosity important in influencing his personal beliefs and values. However, for professional matters pertaining to the running of the school, he had to abide by government rules and regulations.

5.3. HEADTEACHER WASEEM

5.3.1. Person in profession

Waseem's responses reflected an interesting interplay between his religious identity and his professional role as a headteacher. While religion appeared to be a primary source of guidance for Waseem, he made frequent reference to statutory guidance. He derived his principles from both religious and professional sources. Waseem confessed that religion was important for him and it influenced his leadership strategies and principles to a large extent. For example, while dealing with staff and students, he chose to ignore most of their shortcomings and highlighted the strengths instead:

> … my leadership approach is mostly soft and I use motivation and forgiveness when imposing rules for disciplinary actions.

This approach improved the atmosphere within the school and some teachers in TPW1 confirmed that Waseem's principle of forgiveness played an important role in school improvement. For instance, one of the teachers in TPW1 stated that:

> … if a staff member has a problem, we try to resolve it between ourselves [teachers and headteacher]. And sometimes, there are teachers who do not perform well in their classes, so we support them as best we can.

Furthermore, the teachers emphasised that the environment in the school had become collegial especially after Waseem made some changes in the timetable:

> … when Waseem joined the school, the first thing he did was to make sure that the recess time for everyone is the same so that everyone sits together to eat and drink… he [Waseem] did this to make sure that we resolve our issues among ourselves.

By using such strategies, Waseem ensured that teachers were united and did not complain against each other.

Another leadership principle was of cooperation and consultation. This, Waseem thought, was important for staff motivation, especially if he had to take an action which would make some of them unhappy. However, Waseem explained that there were some reservations in using this principle. That is, he was bound to follow the administrative instructions passed on to him by higher authorities in the education department. But sometimes he would involve his staff members as well. Except the polio duty where he did not have much choice, Waseem consulted the leave policy with his management team to ensure some flexibility for the staff. The Office Superintendent in TPW1 confirmed Waseem's principle and stated that:

> … no more than two teachers can take a day off at the same time, so we [staff and headteacher] also try to follow that and request the staff to take a leave only if it's urgent.

A class teacher in TPW1 who was a Procurement Officer in the school, explained that:

> … the headteacher calls a meeting related to any new development and takes the opinion of every teacher.

Teachers in TPW2 had slightly different views about being involved by Waseem in the decision-making process. One teacher in TPW2 expressed his dissatisfaction regarding the authoritative approach of Waseem:

> Sometimes he [Waseem] believes that whatever he says has to be obeyed. He thinks himself as the king of the territory. He thinks that whether the teachers like it or not, they must follow it…

Another teacher in the same group conceded that they had to fulfil Waseem's orders because he was also following the rules set by the Education department. And most of the time, he did not have any freedom in their implementation. Thus, faced with the dilemma of following government directives while ensuring the quality of teaching and learning in the school, Waseem could not use the principle of mutual consultation the way he wanted to.

There were different forms of statutory guidance which Waseem followed while performing his leadership role. A variety of documents and policies were mentioned in the interviews, such as School Manual (*Dastoor-ul-Amal*), Budget Manual, Punjab Employees' Efficiency and Discipline and Accountability Act (PEEDA), etc. In addition to these, Waseem acknowledged that he also consulted his peers and other senior people working in the department for various matters.

Teachers in the focus groups affirmed Waseem's obligation to follow statutory guidance. For example, they regarded Waseem's principles as rules passed to him by the education department:

> … He doesn't have many principles or rules of his own. He has to implement the rules set by the department and we have to cooperate with him on that.

The teachers acknowledged that in some matters, they would argue with Waseem and decide something mutually. However, for most matters, it was compulsory for them to follow Waseem's rules. Giving an example of a government directive, *maar nahin pyar* ('no beating but

love and affection – a slogan aimed to ban corporal punishment in schools), some teachers in TPW2 emphasised that the rule affected the quality of education as students became disrespectful towards their teachers. Nevertheless, a teacher explained that Waseem had no choice but to observe this rule:

> … these rules are made by policy-makers and are passed down to the headteacher who then has to follow them.

Thus, on the one hand, Waseem felt constrained in following the rules and regulations set by the education department. But on the other hand, he cited a number of principles that he abided by as a headteacher, such as forgiveness, kindness, cooperation and mutual consultation.

5.3.2. Religion in Profession

Religion was the main guiding source for Waseem in every aspect of life. Even while following statutory guidance, he used his religion to help him implement rules and policies in the school. For example, referring to the government directive about banning corporal punishment, Waseem used examples from the life of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) to encourage teachers in his school to avoid giving physical punishment. By using examples from the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, he found it easier to persuade his teachers. The life of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was an inspiration for Waseem and one principle that he derived from his life was leniency:

> …even the Qur'an gives testimony for the Prophet's (PBUH) leniency.

For Waseem, his own personal religious beliefs made him a practising Muslim and he acknowledged the impact his religion had on his leadership and administration.

One teacher in TPW1 confirmed that Waseem talked a lot about his religion, which according to him was a 'good thing':

> … it is the duty of a Muslim to say good things. So, he selects a verse from the Holy Qur'an and discusses it. He tries to follow religion in a neutral way.

Other teachers affirmed that although Waseem quoted verses from the Qur'an and *ahadeeth* of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), he presented them as knowledge, rather than trying to manipulate anyone. However, the teachers explained that the frequent use of Qur'an and *hadith* did not affect the enactment of Waseem's professional duties:

> This is because most of our rules are not based on religion. They are government rules. Everyone here is well-educated and we all learn from his [Waseem's] conversations. But if I were to say that he has brought religion in the forefront such that rules are manipulated, that is not true.

Students in the two focus groups had mixed views about the impact of Waseem's religion on his leadership. Some students explained that he shared his knowledge about Islam with them:

> … since our headteacher is a Muslim, he tells us things about Islam and says *salaam*, etc. If our headteacher was a non-Muslim, he wouldn't have given us any information about Islam.

Another student in SPW1 acknowledged the fact that Waseem was quite well-informed about Islam:

> …He quotes things that give us in-depth understanding and information about Islam.

However, there were some students who did not regard Waseem's religion important in leading the school:

> … religion doesn't affect his leadership duties. Rules and regulations are set by higher authorities.

While Waseem insisted that his personal religious beliefs had a huge impact on his leadership and administration of the school, the teachers saw his professional role and responsibilities separate from his religion. One possible reason for this difference in opinions might be the fact that leading a school in a Muslim majority country with Muslim majority teachers and students, Waseem felt more confident about expressing his views about religion. Nevertheless, as explained in the previous sections, when it came to fulfilling his duties as a headteacher, he had no choice but to follow state regulations, with little or no flexibility. Another plausible reason for the differing points of view of Waseem and his teachers could be that his religion informed the principles that underpinned his leadership actions, such as empathy, leniency and kindness. As a practising Muslim, Waseem ensured that all his actions as a headteacher were in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Therefore, his religion, *and* his religious beliefs, were reflected in his narratives.

While dealing with the minority Christian students and staff in his school, Waseem explained that he took guidance from his religion:

> … since our religion has taught us not to harm them [minority religious people], therefore we are mindful of this and do not insult their religious beliefs and personal values.

In terms of making provisions for the Christians, Waseem reported, it was done by allowing them to take holidays on their special occasions as well as allowing them to choose between the subjects of Islamiat and Ethics. However, they still opted for Islamiat:

> … we still haven't had the chance to teach Ethics here. This is because these children [Christians] think they get better grades in Islamiat.

The teachers stated that they did not differentiate between Christian and Muslim students in their classes:

> … the reason why religion is not promoted or made an issue here is that all the teachers are well-educated so everyone understands and they will not try to make religion an issue.

The reason given by teachers for not experiencing any conflicts based on religion was that (a) there were very few Christian students in the school and (b) there was no differentiation between students based on religion, either by Waseem or the teachers.

Students in the two focus groups shared similar experiences regarding Waseem's treatment of minority religious groups. In the two focus groups conducted in the school, there was only one Christian student. A Muslim student stated that Waseem would have cared more for people of *his* religion rather than for a non-Muslim. However, the Christian student negated this statement by saying that:

> I don't agree. The headteacher behaves the same way whether they are Christians or Muslims.

On the one hand, Waseem treated Christian students and staff equally and fairly. But on the other hand, his responses reflected a personal bias towards Christian people. For example, he felt challenged when he had to appoint a non-Muslim teacher in the school:

> … it is not *haram* to do so, but not advisable either, that is, appointing non-Muslims for the moral training of Muslim children. But if I am a government servant and I do not have the authority to appoint teachers, only the non-teaching staff… so that will be against my personal principles, but being a government servant, I have to do it.

Waseem stated that in a Muslim-majority country, there was no shortage of Muslim teachers. This, Waseem explained, did not imply that non-Muslims should be deprived of their right to do a job in this country. Rather, his rationale was that the education and training *(taleem-o-tarbiyyat)* of Muslim children should be the responsibility of Muslims only:

> … it's our duty [as Muslims] to bring them close to us… Therefore, without compromising my own principles, we must keep them together. But we are not going to be influenced by them…

This 'influence' was in terms of the difference between the religious beliefs of Christians and Muslim. However, Waseem ensured that the differences did not compromise his own personal beliefs as a Muslim and also his work relationship with them was not affected. Waseem thought that just as he would not be comfortable in leading a school with majority non-Muslim students, similarly, the Christians in his school would not be comfortable living in a Muslim-majority country.

In addition to the (very little) religious diversity, there was frequent discussion about sects (*Shia* and *Sunni*) in Waseem's interviews. Although my investigation did not aim to look at the sectarian diversity (in the context of this research, this diversity only refers to the *Shia-Sunni* divide) in the schools and the issues arising from them, Waseem, as well as the teachers in the focus groups, mentioned it often in their interviews. This was because this school was situated in a predominantly *Shia* locality. While there were no incidents of sectarian conflicts, the impact of the *Shia* majority students and community, on Waseem's leadership actions was apparent. For example, in the month of *Muharram*, he occasionally invited a *Shia* scholar to explain the significance of this month to staff and students. Waseem affirmed that he focused on the common things between *Sunni* and *Shia* beliefs rather than highlighting the differences.

In conclusion, religion was the main guiding force for Waseem. Furthermore, he regarded his personal religious beliefs instrumental in making him a practising Muslim and this also influenced his role as a headteacher.

5.4. HEADTEACHER EHSAN

5.4.1. Person in profession

Ehsan encouraged students to attend school since the drop-out rate of students was very high in government schools:

> … to reduce this [drop-out rate], we face a lot of problems. We want to make the children good citizens and we try to make them good Muslims such that they become good Pakistani citizens.

Ehsan aspired to promote education to increase the literacy rate in the country:

> … for me the most important thing is that every Pakistani should be educated… Education is the foundation for everything. So, this is our first priority and my mission and inspiration.

At a later point in his interview, Ehsan linked this aspiration to his faith:

> … being a Muslim, I joined the education profession by choice. When Islam emphasises education to the extent that it is considered a *farz* (obligation), it is my mission to achieve the target literacy rate as our nation is far behind in education.

Regarding teaching as noble and prophetic, Ehsan strived to bring those children to school who could not afford education otherwise. Ehsan's responses in the two interviews did not explicitly reveal many principles, except those which were based on the guidance he derived from the education department. However, teachers in the two focus groups mentioned some principles that they observed Ehsan to be using in his leadership:

> … there are these principles Ehsan uses of discipline and of maintaining equality among all; that there is no distinction based on any other criteria.

A teacher in TPE2 experienced the principles of being punctual and regular and doing his work on time. Another teacher in TPE2 explained that one of the principles followed by him, and established by Ehsan, was motivating and treating the students well.

Referring to his treatment with students, Ehsan emphasised that he regarded Christian and Muslim students alike. According to Ehsan, even the students (Christians in particular) preferred not to do anything different:

> … they [Christians] consider themselves Pakistani… when it's time to pray, the Muslim students have an option to go and pray, the rest are free to do what they like… there is no religious conflict taught in the syllabus. There aren't too many religious activities in these [state] schools. We work purely according to the educational framework given to us.

Ehsan mentioned several sources from which he derived guidance for his leadership role. For example, the SED of Punjab government held various courses for capacity building and Ehsan ensured that he participated in such leadership courses.

While following state guidance in carrying out his leadership role, Ehsan confessed that he was challenged by state policies, particularly those that contradicted with his principles. For example, the polio eradication campaign was one event where he faced the dilemma of compromising the teaching and learning in his school for a 'non-educational' activity:

> For me, the priority will be that these teachers teach the children… But since it is an order by the government, I have to forego my personal choice and send the teachers as per orders. And this is a big dilemma in Pakistan … for everything taking place in the country, teachers have to be involved, be it election duty, or polio duty…

In such instances, Ehsan had no choice but to let the teachers go. This in turn, made the teachers unhappy as they considered the selection unfair. According to a teacher:

Whatever policy he [Ehsan] gives us, we have to implement. We do not have our say in that'.

Being government employees, the teachers realised that they too *had to* follow state policies even if they disagreed with some of them.

In addition to following state guidance in the form of policies and orders, Ehsan also felt obliged to abide by the curriculum set for government schools. He attributed the design of the morning assembly and the content of visual displays (see Appendix Q) to the National Curriculum:

> …the curriculum in Pakistan is based on two things: Islam and nationalism.

Even though he acknowledged his role in conducting the morning assembly and placing the visual displays, he did not associate it with his religiosity:

> … it is important that our children become good Muslims and good citizens. There is no such thing as imposing anything on them… As for my own personal religiosity, I don't think that has any role in my administration. This is a public-sector institution; it is not my own personal institution. I can apply only those rules here which are passed on to us by the government… we do not apply any personal rules or beliefs.

As for his role in selecting the content of these displays, Ehsan was mainly guided by the curriculum. Teachers in the focus groups confirmed the content of visual displays by stating that:

> …I think they are our Islamic values, like telling the children to read their daily prayers, respect and honesty.

Ehsan described the culture of the school as 'Islamic and Pakistani'. That is, all festivals held within the school were based on national and religious celebrations such as Iqbal Day (to celebrate the birth of Allama Iqbal on 9th November), Independence Day (to celebrate the independence of Pakistan on 14th August), *Eid Milad-un-Nabi* (to celebrate the birth of Prophet Mohammad), etc.

Summing it up, Ehsan used the principles of empathy, equality, respect and motivation in his leadership.

5.4.2. Religion in Profession

Ehsan's responses suggested that for most of his leadership actions, he relied on state guidance. While religion was important for Ehsan in several ways, the way he expressed his religious views suggested that religion affected his personal life more than his professional role:

> The support of religion is always there because that is a complete part of our lives, our thoughts, our likes and our dislikes. So ultimately religion does come into our lives. But for administrative issues, I don't think I give it too much importance.

Ehsan felt more obligated to follow statutory guidance rather than his personal religious beliefs and principles. Religion, according to Ehsan, was part of his upbringing, his conversation and his way of life. But as a headteacher, he was clear about prioritising professional guidance over religious guidance:

> For me, there is no conflict between religion and my profession because the administration of this school is a professional task and I do what is expected of me by my profession and the instructions given to us by the government. And there is no involvement of personal thought, personal ego and personal choice as it is a purely public sector institution. Whatever policies are made by the government, we have to enforce and implement.

The way Ehsan perceived the role of religion in his profession suggested that as a headteacher, he decided to abide by the expectations of the education department to fulfil his professional role without being influenced by his personal religious beliefs. This perception was experienced by the teachers as one teacher in TPE1 stated:

> I think Ehsan's religion is not that important as all policy matters are dictated to us from above and they are the same for everyone. Even if there is a person with a different religion or the children have different religions, the policies of the state will remain the same.

Like other headteachers, the provisions made by Ehsan for Christian students were mostly in terms of offering Ethics as an alternative subject to Islamiat. Regarding his dealings with

minority Christian students, Ehsan acknowledged the role of Islam in teaching him how to keep a balance between different religions and sects (*Shia* and *Sunni* sects in this case) to avoid conflicts:

> We respect them [Christians]. Our religion emphasises on dealing with minorities, so there is a lot of guidance in Islam, a lot of enlightenment. So we try to maintain a balance.

Ehsan explained that in a state institution, the government controlled everything. Therefore, there were no conflicts between students of different religions as well as sects. In case any such issue was highlighted, the government would immediately take action to control it. Teachers also confirmed that they did not experience any conflicts based either on religion or sects:

> No one asks about each other's religion and the children are the same. They [Christians] are given the option to study Ethics but they all choose to study Islamiat.

Another teacher in TPE2 said that:

> … we accommodate Christian students for any kind of equality. We do not indulge in any talk about sects. We only talk about the basic things like daily prayers, Qur'an and the message of God.

Even though the teachers in the school were aware of the *Shia-Sunni* differences between Muslim children, the fact that they did not encounter any conflict based on these differences led them to think that Ehsan's religion was not significant in dealing with such diversity.

In summary, Ehsan articulated his religion as having a greater impact on his personal rather than professional life. While his religious beliefs and values were important to him, he prioritised professional guidance over religious guidance in matters pertaining to his leadership role.

5.5. HEADTEACHER RABIA

5.5.1. Person in profession

According to Rabia, a leader was like a guide for his entire team:

> … He is not an outsider, rather he is one of the team members and has to guide them to achieve targets in the right way.

As a headteacher, Rabia felt responsible for the *tarbiyyat* (moral training) of her students as well as for their academic success. She considered herself as a 'facilitator' rather than a boss:

> I try to facilitate them as much as I can; that is whatever policies are made at the top [the SED], I implement them and I act as a bridge between the department and the school.

Furthermore, Rabia regarded a leader as a servant:

> … the leader has to serve; he has to submit. He is an engine which has to take along even the last compartment as it is his responsibility to do so.

Rabia explained that she derived the idea of 'servant leadership' from the life of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Following the footsteps of the Prophet (PBUH), Rabia did not mind doing the tasks for her staff members and helping them as much as she could.

Doing work on behalf of her teachers was a principle that Rabia derived from her idea of serving the staff. Rabia explained that working in a position of authority motivated her to base her leadership actions on the principle of honesty and fairness as she felt accountable to Allah for the role she was given and its associated responsibilities:

> … coming to this position after being selected from among so many people, motivates me that whatever the circumstances, I should fulfil the responsibilities.

While Rabia tried to conduct her leadership role with a sense of responsibility, the excessive pressure exerted by the government on headteachers was demotivating:

> … we have to do all clerical work ourselves… we have to give the same information again and again and that makes me tired… the headteacher is not just a head anymore, he is a postman.

In addition to the extra paperwork, Rabia also felt frustrated when her teachers were called in by the SED for doing Polio and Dengue duties. This, put extra pressure on her as she found it challenging to compensate for the missing teachers.

Describing her vision for the school, Rabia stated that it was:

> to educate the deprived students in the society, especially the girls.

Rabia considered girls in Pakistani society as deprived. Owing to the social background of most girls in her school, Rabia decided to make it her mission to teach not just any child, but girls in particular. She used the principle of mutual consultation and worked collaboratively with her staff to encourage girls to be regular. She also had to make a lot of effort to convince the parents, especially mothers, to allow their daughters to continue education after Matriculation:

> … I keep telling them that these girls [students], right after Matriculation, can teach in small local private schools or give private tuition to children, or even continue studying.

Using her religious views and knowledge, Rabia tried to convince the parents to allow their daughters to come to school.

While Rabia derived the guidance for carrying out her professional role from state policies and regulations, religious guidance was equally important for her:

> … we have the guidelines available for us in our religion, Islam. We follow Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and he proved himself to be a leader in every field. So, we *should* take guidance from there and we do.

On the one hand, Rabia proved that she was obligated to follow statutory guidance for all matters pertaining to the running of the school. But on the other hand, she admitted that most of her principles were grounded in her faith, such as honesty, fairness, tolerance and patience.

5.5.2. Religion in profession

Rabia regarded her personal religiosity significantly important in influencing her leadership. Since she observed *purdah* herself (normally she wore a *dupatta*, but in the presence of men, she would cover her face with a *niqaab-a veil*), she tried to convince the students in her school to do the same. However, she did not force the students to cover their head. All girls came to school wearing a *dupatta* as that was part of the cultural dress and she did not have to ask them to do so:

> Whatever the headteacher is like, the atmosphere of the school becomes the same… For example, if it's about me, then if a girl covers her head, it is a good thing.

Other aspects of her leadership for which Rabia took guidance from her religion were to provide ease to her staff in terms of following rules and regulations.

Rabia explained that there was very little religious diversity in her school. There were very few Christian students in her school; however, the *Shia-Sunni* diversity was more significant. While dealing with diversity (religious and/or sectarian), Rabia used the principle of promoting the common things:

> We try to explain to the children that things which are related to humanity are all the same for everyone… majority in this school are *Ahl-e-kitaab* (people of the book). That is

> even the Christians are reading a book, the Bible. So, we emphasise that everyone should believe in Allah and the teachings of the [holy] books that are similar.

In terms of making provisions for Christian students, Rabia explained that they were offered the subject of Ethics as an alternative to Islamiat. The reason given by Christian students for not studying Ethics, Rabia described, was because they found it easy to study Islamiat along with other students. Nevertheless, the Ethics book comprised universal ethics common to the teachings of all prophets. Additionally, Rabia accommodated Christian students for their special occasions and allowed them to take a day off from school.

To understand the religious needs of the students, Rabia used the principles of tolerance and patience and conveyed the same to her teachers:

> Although the teachers understand the differences, I have to tell them that Islam is a religion of tolerance and we have to be careful that the children do not feel hurt.

Rabia explained than in instances where they had to teach the Muslim children about Qur'an, they would inform the Christian students beforehand:

> We tell them that whatever we are reading, we are doing it as part of the syllabus and do not intend to hurt anyone. This is our religion and we *have to* study it. If you want to attend the class, fine, otherwise, you can study something else.

Considering them all as 'people of the book', Rabia believed in giving equal rights to the Christian students and was conscious about not hurting their beliefs, religious or otherwise.

Teachers in the focus groups did not talk much about the way Rabia dealt with religious diversity in the school. Their responses reflected the *Shia-Sunni* diversity more than religious diversity. Likewise, students also understood diversity in the same way. They affirmed that Rabia treated everyone the same in her school:

> She doesn't think that this child is a Muslim, this is a Christian or this is a *Shia* or this is a *Sunni*. She treats everyone alike.

As for accommodating Christian students, a girl in SPR1 stated that:

> When the Christian children have any occasion, the headteacher gives them a day off.

Students in SPR2 confirmed that Christian students were not forced to memorise the Arabic verses of the Qur'an if they opted to study Islamiat. However, if the students were comfortable in learning the translation only, they could do so, as Rabia understood that their religious beliefs were different than the Muslims.

Since the school was situated in a *Shia*-majority locality, Rabia had to deal with issues pertaining to *Shia* students who comprised about half of the total student population:

> … there is no conflict among the children, but there are times, in the month of *Muharram*, when we do give them some allowance.

Rabia used the principles of patience and tolerance to accommodate both religious minority, i.e. Christian students, as well as the *Shia* majority students for their religious observances.

Teachers and students in the focus groups mentioned the *Shia-Sunni* diversity in the school quite frequently. In terms of dealing with this diversity, one teacher in TPR1 confirmed that:

> Rabia doesn't let her religion come in her professional dealings. Only when someone has an issue, she uses her knowledge of religion to clarify.

Another teacher in the same group affirmed that Rabia advised teachers to avoid getting involved in any kind of *Shia-Sunni* conflicts:

> She asks us not to discuss sects. Whatever, whoever is following, should be his or her personal matter. Since these things [*Shia-Sunni* issues] lead to bigger issues, it's better not to discuss any such thing in school.

A teacher in TPR2 shared a similar experience:

> She [Rabia] discourages it [*Shia-Sunni* differences]. It is the requirement of her role too. She is neither a *Sunni* nor a *Shia*. We are all Muslims.

Teachers argued that the occasional conflicts between *Sunni* and *Shia* sects happened mostly between students as teachers were conscious about avoiding such things.

In conclusion, Rabia's personal religiosity had a significant impact on the way she led her school. While she followed the state rules and regulations in performing her leadership responsibilities, religious guidance was equally important for her and underpinned most of the principles she described.

5.6. HEADTEACHER AZIZA

5.6.1. Person in profession

Aziza liked taking everyone along while leading the school. She understood that every person had a certain capacity to work, therefore she would assign tasks to different people according to their potential:

> I try my best to care for every individual's wants and way of learning and respect them for that.

In terms of drawing the principles which underpinned her leadership actions, Aziza considered (a) rules and regulations set by the Education department, and (b) needs of the people around her. While the former did not give her any choice but to base her principles on government directives, the latter guided her to use principles that were largely dependent on her personal

religious beliefs. Consequently, her dealings with people in her school, staff and students alike, were based on principles she derived from her religion.

Aziza considered mutual consultation important in improving her relationship with the people working for her:

> … If everyone works together, there will be fewer mistakes. Every person has his own thinking and has the potential to give some advice. Also the headteacher cannot handle the school affairs by herself; so it's important to work together.

While involving teachers and members of the school council in the day-to-day affairs of the school, Aziza assigned a task to everyone:

> … everyone gets an opportunity to do some work. We also discuss with the school council before doing anything. We ask them to cooperate with us in improving the school attendance.

Aziza regarded delegating authority, especially to council members, as helpful. For example, the council members (mothers only) had numerous problems and concerns owing to which they could not get involved in school affairs. By offering them a traveling allowance, Aziza ensured that she managed the school affairs through mutual consultation with parents and council members alike.

In addition to involving council members, Aziza used the principle of mutual consultation with her teachers as well:

> We take important decisions together. Sometimes the teachers suggest something good. So, if I incorporate those things, they feel they have been given some importance.

Teachers in the focus group agreed with Aziza's principle of mutual consultation. For example, one teacher stated that:

> … if there is an issue, we sit and resolve it. She [Aziza] listens and agrees with some [solutions] while at other times, *we* have to agree with her. It's a friendly atmosphere and we work better this way.

A teacher in TPA1 affirmed that she used the same principles as Aziza in her teaching:

> When we are teaching in the class, we are using our own principles but they are the same as hers. We try to follow her principles.

Other teachers in the group acknowledged the significance of Aziza in the school and confirmed that she worked hard to make the atmosphere comfortable to work in.

Aziza stressed that religious guidance was equally important for her. For example, the content of the morning assembly and the visual displays (see Appendix Q) was dictated by the government. While Aziza abided by the rules in this regard, she confirmed that her own religiosity influenced the additional things she included in the assembly and the visual displays. For example, she related examples from the life of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) during the morning assembly to impart values to staff and students such as honesty, trustworthiness, mannerism, cleanliness and respect. Similarly, when preparing the visual displays, she used her own knowledge of the religion to transfer values to the students by painting things she considered valuable:

> When the children read them, there will be some influence on them.

Aziza affirmed that her main duty was to fulfil her responsibilities as a headteacher; nevertheless, she took guidance from her religion for her professional role:

> Religion guides me for everything I do as a headteacher. I cannot separate religion from my profession at any time.

To conclude, Aziza abided by the principles of respect, empathy, mutual consultation and delegation of authority. While she acknowledged the professional sources of guidance, religious guidance took precedence over professional guidance.

5.6.2. Religion in profession

Religion for Aziza was 'an open book' which helped her solve every problem. While carrying out her duties as a headteacher, Aziza emphasised the importance of her religion. She believed in total submission to Allah as this gave her a lot of satisfaction:

> … if I start believing that everything happens according to the will of Allah, then anyone who has harmed me, I should not do the same. We should accept that the harm is destined for us by the will of Allah… one should have complete faith in Allah…

Aziza attributed the difficult times she faced in her leadership role to the 'will of Allah' and was therefore not intimidated by them. As for the influence of her personal religiosity on her staff and students, Aziza affirmed that one of the most obvious impact was that staff and students in her school followed her habit of observing *purdah*:

> If you show to others by doing things practically, instead of telling them, they do get influenced, both teachers as well as students.

Teachers in the focus groups confirmed this fact and one of the teachers in TPA1 stated:

> Aziza's religion has had an impact on the school. A lot of teachers have started wearing the *abaaya* (a long gown worn over the clothes) just like her.

Another teacher said:

> I started following her [Aziza's] habit of observing *purdah* and so did my daughter and I'm very proud of her. We have learnt a lot from her.

Considering the deprivation factor of most students in the school, Aziza took special care of the needy students:

> I had a list of children who were orphans. I buy them uniform… if you go in a class, you won't find such children as all of them are poor. And those who do not have mothers, I tell the teachers to love them even more so that they do not feel deprived.

Aziza explained that she derived the principle of empathy and kindness from her religion:

> The first thing I keep in mind is my own religion. It's the fear of Allah and His guidelines that I consider first when dealing with such children [orphans]. As a human being, we do make mistakes, but I am conscious that as a Muslim, I am answerable to Allah and He is watching me.

Aziza extended the principle of empathy to the minority Christian students as well. Of the five schools selected for this project, Aziza's school had the largest population of Christian students and, therefore, she was conscious of her dealings with them:

> I know that our behaviour towards Christian students should be very good so that they are impressed by us, rather than hating us…

Aziza was conscious of her behaviour with Christian teachers too:

> I make sure that they do not face any problem and that they do not feel they are different from the others. We don't discriminate them and neither our religion allows us to do that.

Following the footsteps of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), Aziza treated the Christian students and teachers in the best possible way.

Aziza's dealings with the orphans and minority Christian students were observed and acknowledged by teachers and students in her school as well. A student in SPA2 stated that:

> Madam [Aziza] is very caring for the poor and if they don't have anything, she would buy them herself.

Affirming that Aziza's religion did not have any impact on the way she dealt with Muslim and Christian students, a student in SPA1 explained that:

> If there are any poor children, madam [Aziza] gets uniform for them regardless that they are Muslims or Christians.

Similarly, students observed that Aziza did not differentiate between Muslim and Christian students:

> Madam has never considered us as Muslims and Christians. She treats us all the same. She distributes uniform, stationery, etc. to all the needy children.

The teachers also confirmed that Aziza treated Muslim and Christian students alike and considered them humans rather than discriminating between them based on their religion.

Aziza confirmed that her personal religious inclination had a significant impact on the way she led her school.

PART II

DISCUSSION

5.7. INTRODUCTION

This section aims to synthesise the findings of the five Muslim headteachers in Pakistan (MHIP), using the same approach and methodology as that used for the MHIE (see Chapter 4, Part II). In light of the narrative case studies, presented in Part I, in this section, I will examine how principles, actions and guidance interacted with one another and with various other contextual factors to influence the headteachers in carrying out their professional roles. I have synthesised the narratives of the five headteachers under the two broad themes, (a) Person in profession and (b) Religion in profession. While these themes run through the different data sets, there are yet more themes which emerged from the data. These themes will be highlighted where relevant. It is important to note here that I will engage with the relevant literature in more detail in the comparative chapter (Chapter 6) where I will bring together the interpretive analyses of the MHIE and the MHIP. Therefore, in this interpretive analysis of MHIP, my engagement with literature will be very light.

5.8. PERSON IN PROFESSION

The purpose of this research project is to investigate whether leadership actions of Muslim headteachers are influenced by their religion. The analysis of the findings in Part I provided an understanding of the headteachers' principles, actions and guidance. This understanding was further developed as various factors comprising individual, institutional and national context

emerged in the narratives of the five headteachers. While synthesising the findings from the narratives, a significant degree of interrelationship appeared between the headteachers' principles, actions, guidance and the contexts in which they worked. In the paragraphs that follow, I will engage in a deeper examination of this relationship.

The MHIP declared religion as their primary source of guidance. The evidence for this declaration was provided in the headteachers' narratives, in which they emphasised the role of Islam in their everyday lives, to the extent that they found it impossible to disentangle their actions from their religion. Keeping in mind the focus of this research, it was therefore a challenge to understand how, and to what extent, religion influenced the headteachers in a professional, rather than personal way. The narrative case studies in Part I revealed that the MHIP lived and breathed Islam. While the second theme, 'Religion and profession', will explore the various dimensions of this finding in greater depth, in the following paragraphs, I will highlight other sources of guidance which informed the headteachers' leadership actions.

The narratives of the MHIP show that as government employees, their actions were profoundly circumscribed by government policies, rules and regulations. The extent of this confinement was reflected in the way they called themselves 'government servants' and felt obliged to follow government rules, regulations and policies. Owing to this rigid obligation, the headteachers experienced a dilemma, which was highlighted in their narratives and is best understood by studying various guiding documents prepared (for headteachers) by the SED of the Government of Punjab (GoP). One such document, called the School Manual (*Dastoor-ul-Amal*) stated that, 'The headteacher is responsible for achieving the Quantity, Quality and Efficiency goals of the institution. To ensure the achievement of these goals, h/she has been given all necessary authority' (Translated from the section, 'Headteachers' responsibilities and authority' in *Dastoor-*

ul-Amal, SED Government of Punjab, Lahore; p.5). The title of this section indicated that the headteachers were given the authority to fulfil the stated responsibilities. However, it was evident from the narratives of the MHIP that they faced a dilemma while trying to achieve these goals to fulfil the government's mission.

For example, on the one hand, the government insisted on achieving quality targets in the schools, but on the other hand, the headteachers were expected to send teachers for different non-educational activities. A commonly cited example of a non-educational activity was the Polio duty where the headteachers had to ask teachers to leave their teaching in order to participate in the Polio eradication campaign. Such activities demotivated the headteachers as well as teachers since they found it challenging to achieve the quality targets while simultaneously fulfilling government expectations. It was here that the headteachers were faced with a dilemma as they felt incapable of fulfilling the professional expectations set by the government.

The fact that the headteachers had little or no authority to take an action outside the rules and regulations framework was also sensed by the teachers in their respective schools. While describing their experiences of the headteachers, the teachers perceived them as authoritative owing to their incapacity to act differently. Nevertheless, the headteachers tried to manipulate their limited freedom to some extent. Such manipulation resulted in marginal differences in the headteachers' actions, which were reflected in how they tried to cascade the rules and regulations to members of staff while prioritising (a) the learning of the students and (b) the satisfaction of the teachers. For example, Waseem had mutual consultation with his staff when deciding on which teachers to send for the Polio duty. This way he tried to appear less authoritative to the teachers, even though he had no autonomy to decline the orders of the higher authorities. Ehsan, on the other hand, tried to assign the Polio duty to teachers other than class incharge

(class teachers) since he felt that class teachers were more important for the students. Although, in this way, duties were not fairly distributed, it was the best solution Ehsan could think of while keeping students' welfare in mind.

Rabia supported her staff in a slightly different way. Considering herself a 'servant', she not only followed the orders of the Education department, but also 'served' her staff by doing most of the additional tasks herself. By using this approach, she thought that she could save her staff from as many extra tasks as possible. Therefore, as much as the headteachers disagreed with the nature of the regulation, they tried to comply with it in the best possible manner by using personal principles in a professional role. While the professional guidance derived from government regulations and policies became the context which directly influenced the headteachers' leadership actions, the headteachers' personal motivation also shaped their leadership actions. Though not equally instrumental, both these contexts (institutional and individual) provided nuanced insights into the leadership actions of the MHIP.

Following the statutory guidance, some of the principles articulated by the headteachers were mutual consultation, cooperation, working collaboratively and improving the lives of students. The narratives of the headteachers provided sufficient evidence that all these principles were manifested in their actions. While the headteachers expressed them as their own principles, the teachers had a different opinion. Most teachers in the focus groups regarded themselves similar to the headteachers in that they were all government employees with little or no allowance for exercising personal choice in their professional roles. Therefore, the principles stated above were viewed by the teachers as 'rules' which they had to abide by in their profession. Regardless of the difference in opinion, the headteachers took ownership of these and other principles such as empathy, charity, equality, fairness, respect, honesty, tolerance, patience and cleanliness.

However, as mentioned earlier, all headteachers were inclined to relate these principles to their religion. Since religion was part of their everyday speech, it was a challenge to understand how it *actually* helped them in their professional role.

Looking at their narratives, there were examples where some headteachers were explicit in narrating actions whose underlying principles were grounded in their religion. For instance, Malik derived the principles of kindness and tolerance from a traumatic incident in his life. The incident made him more God-fearing and motivated him to deal with people in his care with kindness and empathy. Similarly, Waseem faced resistance from his staff while abiding by the government policy of banning corporal punishment. By using examples from the Qur'an and the life of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), he could convince his teachers to use the principle of leniency and kindness while dealing with difficult students. For Rabia, her position as a headteacher was an inspiration for her and she felt thankful as well as accountable to Allah for granting her a leadership position amongst many others. Thus, she attributed her principles of honesty and fairness to her religion.

Looking at the above examples, it appears that the headteachers' religion was both a source of guidance *and* a foundation for their leadership principles. Although the headteachers confirmed the importance of professional guidance for carrying out a professional role, some of them openly expressed the religious foundations of their principles that they were employing and promoting in their schools. I will now discuss the second theme derived from the headteachers' narratives, 'Religion in profession', to explore the dimensions of religion.

5.9. RELIGION IN PROFESSION

The discourse used by the MHIP was mostly religious. The Islamic foundation of the discourse was reflected in the headteachers' narratives, owing to which they found it difficult to view their professional identity separate from their religious identity. The headteachers' significant emphasis on Islam, suggested its importance in their everyday life to the extent that they appeared to live and breathe Islam.

As mentioned earlier, the primary source of guidance for the MHIP was their religion, Islam. Recognising the focus of this research, in the previous section, I tried to draw on data from the findings that helped me untangle the components of religious guidance from statutory guidance. In this section, I aim to explore the various dimensions of religious guidance in an attempt to understand how religion actually influenced the leadership actions of headteachers working in state schools in Pakistan. In so doing, I will present my discussion of the three sub-themes, derived from the narratives, which portray the various contextual elements of religion for the Pakistani headteachers:

a) Expression of religion

b) Discourse of religion

c) Religion and culture

5.9.1. Expression of religion

> … "real guidance" comes from religion. (Malik)

The above quote from one of the five MHIP describes the extent to which he considered religion important and consequently felt free to express it openly. A similar freedom was observed in the narratives of other headteachers. However, the extent to which they expressed and used religion in their leadership role was shaped by the headteachers' personal religious inclination. This inclination, as evident from the narratives, varied from one headteacher to another; but it was clear that all five of them regarded Islam as a faith from which they derived all sorts of guidance. The way the headteachers brought religion into their speech suggested that not only did it benefit *them* as Muslims, but also matched the perceptions of those around them (teachers and students). In other words, associating their leadership actions with religious guidance and religious principles reflected the headteachers' own interest of being 'good' Muslims who believed they were accountable to Allah on the Day of Judgement.

The expression of religion for all five headteachers was based on a specific understanding they had of Islam. Although this understanding and the resulting level of religious inclination was different for the five headteachers, none of them felt the need to separate religion from their profession. There could be several plausible reasons why the headteachers did not regard the co-existence of religion and profession problematic. Firstly, the expression of religion in the headteachers' responses implied that religion did not conflict with the way they carried out their leadership responsibilities. In fact, there were various occasions (described in Part I) where using religion actually benefited them. Secondly, most of the headteachers declared Islam as a guiding source in their everyday life. Therefore, while following government policies and regulations, the

MHIP regarded religion as a source of spiritual strength from which they could derive guidance, both for their personal lives and their professional role.

A third reason for the headteachers' explicit manifestation of religion could be linked to the role of Islam in the national curriculum, law and policy. Though not part of my investigation nor the scope of the study, responses relating to the role of Islam in the Pakistani constitution and its relationship with curriculum kept surfacing in the headteachers' narratives (this relationship has been illustrated in Chapter 2 under the section meso-level institutional factors).Therefore, the headteachers' emphasis on Islam could be attributed to the importance given to Islam in the National Education Policy (1998-2010). It seemed as if the headteachers had internalised Islam as the controlling authority for their beliefs and social practices (Durrani and Dunne, 2010b). Considering that Islam is not just a faith but a complete code of behaviour 'with no separation between religious, social, economic or political affairs' (Zia, 2003), the headteachers' argument that religion and profession could not be separated was not a surprise.

While the personal religious inclination of the MHIP was manifested in different ways, the narratives of the two female headteachers had some similarities. Both observed *purdah* and explained that this had a direct impact on the staff and students in the school in that they also started observing *purdah* in the same way. The teachers in both schools expressed a 'sense of achievement' when they acknowledged that they were inspired by their respective headteachers. Surprisingly, none of the headteachers' responses suggested that this was deliberate. Nevertheless, the responses of teachers and students reflected that their headteachers were role models for them. And since religion was an important aspect of their lives as well, following the footsteps of their headteachers (in terms of observing *purdah*) made them feel better Muslims.

In the above paragraphs, I discussed the various aspects of 'Expression of religion' such as what the headteachers could say about religion, how they talked about religion and whether they felt the need to separate religion from their profession. I will now turn to the other dimension of 'Religion in profession', that is, the discourse of religion used by the five headteachers in a public institution.

5.9.2. Discourse of religion

The profession of teaching was considered 'prophetic' by almost all the five MHIP. Regarding Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) as an exemplary teacher, the headteachers felt honoured to be in this profession as they believed they were following the footsteps of the Prophet (PBUH). Talking specifically about their leadership role, Malik and Rabia described themselves as 'servant leaders' – a belief grounded in their religion because they idealised the leadership aspects of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Similarly, Aziza tried to keep all her leadership actions in line with her religious obligations by 'being conscious that as a Muslim, she is accountable to Allah as He is watching her'. Although the Islamic discourse used by the headteachers matched the religious beliefs of the majority (teachers and students) in the selected schools, there was a small minority of Christians in all five schools whose religious needs were expected to be different. Considering this fact important, the headteachers were probed about how they dealt with students of minority faiths.

One of the headteachers, Rabia, regarded 'collective' values more important than 'personal' values when dealing with staff and students in her school. While this implied that she did not try to impose her own religious principles [especially] on students of minority faith, the similarity between her own religious background and that of the staff and students inevitably led to the

Islam-dominant discourse she used in the interviews. Other headteachers acknowledged Christian students in their schools by (a) using the "common-values" discourse and (b) regarding the dealing of minority faith students as a religious obligation.

Similarly, while explaining the content of the subject of Ethics (for non-Muslim students), the headteachers emphasised that the values taught in this subject were universal. However, all the MHIP confessed that none of the minority Christian students opted to study Ethics. Instead they all studied Islamic Studies, commonly known as Islamiat in the Pakistani schools. This finding implied that although an academic provision was available for minority faith students, they did not consider it by choice. Thus, the headteachers did not feel the need to use a discourse that would cater to students of minority faiths (the prominent religious minorities in Pakistan are Christians, Hindus and Sikhs. However, in the selected schools, there were only Christian students and their number was very small). This was further explained by Malik who affirmed that although he tried to meet the educational needs of the minority faith students, his leadership actions did not address their religious needs. The most important reason for this, as narrated by Malik, was that 'minority students do not express these needs openly'.

This relates to the discussion, in the previous section, about the role of Islam in curriculum, law and policy; that is the 'state-sanctioned superimposition of Islam' (Durrani and Dunne, 2010a) contributed to the headteachers' free and open expression of their religion. However, there was no evidence in the narratives that explained why minority faith students could not express themselves openly. Since this particular observation was beyond the scope of this project, I have reported it to the extent to which the headteachers dealt with such situations, considering their own religious background. There were only one or two Christian students in some focus groups.

When asked about the impact of the headteachers' religion on how they dealt with minority faith students, all of them confirmed that they were treated no differently.

Another dimension of the religious discourse, which emerged in two of the five headteachers' narratives (Waseem and Rabia), was related to the sectarian diversity in these schools. Though not part of the investigation, there was frequent mention of *Shia* and *Sunni* sects in the focus groups conducted in these schools. Therefore, in addition to asking about how they managed religious diversity, the headteachers of these schools were also probed about the ways in which they dealt with the *Shia-Sunni* diversity in their schools. The two headteachers explained that they made provisions for the Shia students and staff by arranging special assemblies and counselling *Shia* students during their holy month of *Muharram*. Apart from this, there was not much evidence of any impact of the *Shia-Sunni* diversity on the leadership principles of these headteachers.

5.9.3. Religion and culture

While most of the MHIP considered Islam as their primary source of guidance, the explicit reference to Islam was frequently linked to the place of religion in the national culture. Considering themselves citizens of a country, which was founded on the ideology of Islam, the MHIP found it difficult to view religion as external to their personal and professional lives. All five headteachers correlated their personal religiosity (and its influence on their professional role) with being part of a Muslim community; a fact which (in some way) *expected* them to base their principles on Islam. Such a correlation confirmed the rhetoric of the Pakistani and the Islamic culture as being synonymous. Therefore, the open expression of religion and its manifestation in a professional role was considered normal by the headteachers.

Although the close intertwining of religion and culture was acknowledged by all the MHIP, the way they articulated it in a professional role was slightly different for each of them. For example, Ehsan linked the school curriculum with Islam and nationalism as it aimed to make the students good Muslims and good citizens. However, he did not regard his own religious inclination important in school administration even though he acknowledged the dominance of Islam and Islamic discourse in the national culture. The National Education Policy (NEP), 2009, affirms this finding by recognising the importance of including Islamic values in Pakistan's education system. While attributing the cultural values of the majority of Pakistanis to Islam, the Policy declared that 'Pakistan's educational interventions have to be based on the core values of religion and faith'. Such a declaration was also based on the various articles of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, which confirmed the need to develop Pakistani children as 'proud Pakistani citizens having strong faith in religion and religious teachings' (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973). Malik, on the other hand, believed that his personal religiosity was influenced by the Islamic culture prevalent in the country. He emphasised the role of Islam in the national culture by stating that even people who were less inclined towards religion would observe traditional rituals such as praying in the mosque during the month of Ramadan as a result of living in a country where Islam is the state religion.

Unlike their male counterparts, the two female headteachers tried to separate elements of religion from culture by referring to the observance of *purdah*, which they considered a religious obligation. Since both female headteachers strictly observed *purdah* in their schools, they expected and encouraged their members of staff and students to do the same. However, keeping in mind the minority Christian students (and some members of staff as well) in the school, the headteachers did not enforce the observance of *purdah*. According to these headteachers, a *dupatta*, which was part of the cultural dress in Pakistan, would suffice for the traditional Islamic

purdah. Even though the headteachers differentiated between the Islamic and cultural way of dressing, their examples implied that like the majority of Pakistanis, the cultural values of teachers and students (both Muslims and non-Muslims), with respect to the observance of *purdah*, were derived from Islam.

This overlap of 'cultural' and 'religious' way of dressing highlights the contested relationship between the two terms, 'culture' and 'religion'. That is, on the one hand, there are some aspects of religion which are not influenced by regional culture, such as the five pillars of Islam. On the other hand, there are aspects of religion which can change with the regional culture. For example, the colour of the prayer mat or the way the Qur'an is written, even though the Qur'anic text itself is not culturally bound. Therefore, wearing a *dupatta*, in this case was part of the regional as well as the religious culture. Similar to their counterparts in England, differentiating between elements of culture and religion was a strategic choice made by the MHIP. One possible reason for this could be the headteachers' awareness of the minority religious groups present in their schools. Even though the female headteachers regarded the observance of *purdah* as a manifestation of their personal religiosity, they could not impose it on people of other faiths.

5.10. SUMMARY

The analysis presented in this section provides answers, in relation to the Pakistani headteachers, for the following research questions set for this project:

a) What are the principles that underlie the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers?

b) What are the different types of guidance followed by these Muslim headteachers?

c) What contextual factors influence the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers in Pakistan?

The analysis of the first theme, 'Person in profession' shows that the principles and guidance used by the headteachers were both professional and religious. Although all five MHIP 'declared' Islam as their primary source of guidance, they found themselves confined within the framework of government rules, regulations and policies. The prescriptive nature of government rules and regulations was experienced by all headteachers in quite a similar way. Nevertheless, each individual headteacher tried to manoeuvre his/her actions to some extent by drawing on principles such as empathy, humanity, respect, equality, honesty and forgiveness. These principles were formed by (or based on) the values and beliefs of the headteachers, which were mostly attributed to their religion. However, the significance of statutory guidance remained. The sources of the statutory guidance were clearly identified by the headteachers and even the teachers in the selected schools confirmed that following rules and regulations set by the education department was mandatory for teachers and headteachers alike.

The analysis of the second theme, 'Religion in profession', illustrated how religion was perceived by the MHIP in their personal as well as professional lives. None of the headteachers experienced any tension between their professional and religious identity which is why it was difficult for them to think of their personal faith as separate from their professional role. While religion and profession were closely intertwined for these headteachers, there was very little evidence in the headteachers' narratives where they had to compromise between their professional responsibilities and their personal religiosity. The only instance where there appeared to be some conflict between profession and religion was when one of the headteachers (Malik) had to compromise the observance of the *taraweeh* prayers during the month of *Ramadan*

in order to fulfil the orders of the Chief Minister. However, by compromising the length of the prayers, he was able to fulfil his professional responsibilities. The way the MHIP expressed their religion in a professional role showed that there were nuanced differences in the way they balanced their professional and religious principles.

The narrative case studies also suggest that Islam being the national religion of Pakistan clearly made all the headteachers confident in expressing their religious values and deriving their principles from Islam. Except for one or two headteachers, most of them did not feel it necessary to relate their values/principles to any other religion. This, they expressed, was because Pakistan is an Islamic country. In addition to this, the female headteachers felt confident about observing *purdah* in the school. Again, this was attributed, by these headteachers, to the status of Islam as a national religion of Pakistan. Finally, the Islamic content of the curriculum (evident from the visual displays, school assemblies and syllabus) was based on the ideology of Pakistan, which the headteachers described as national and Islamic. These contextual factors will be discussed in further detail in the comparative chapter (Chapter 6) while relating them to relevant theory and literature.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

COMPARISON BETWEEN MUSLIM HEADTEACHERS IN ENGLAND AND PAKISTAN

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a comparison of how the Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan perceived and exercised their religion (Islam) in a leadership position. The comparison of the headteachers, within and between the two countries, will comprise a synthesis of the analysis (Chapters 4 and 5) and the literature (Chapter 2) with the aim to answer the main research question, 'How do Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan perceive the role of religion in their profession?' A critical engagement with the comparative dimensions of this research will be achieved by comparing and contrasting the findings of this study with those from previous research studies while drawing links between them.

To explore the social phenomenon, described in Chapter 3, I was interested to find out (a) how the Muslim headteachers understood and articulated their religion in a professional role and (b) whether it influenced their leadership actions and the underlying principles. The review of literature (Chapter 2) emphasised the importance of 'context' in which school leadership was exercised, especially considering the comparative nature of this research. The macro (national), meso (institutional) and micro (personal) levels of context and the elements that constituted them were illustrated in Chapter 2. Remaining alert to the focus of this research and the social

phenomenon, religion was reviewed at all three levels. Therefore, while considering religion as a contextual/contingent factor, which manifests itself at various interacting levels such as the macro, meso and micro-levels, the findings of this study highlighted how religion plays out differently in the Muslim headteachers' professional roles working in different national contexts.

The findings, explained through the narratives of the ten headteachers (Chapters 4 and 5), indicated that the way Muslim headteachers articulated their religion in a professional role was influenced by (i) the place given to religion in the public sphere of England and Pakistan, (ii) the extent to which they believed they could express religion in a state-led school (without a religious character) and (iii) the individual headteachers' religious inclination (personal religiosity). In this chapter, I will synthesise the findings *and* the literature and engage in a critical discussion to show that the formulation of the Muslim headteachers' principles underlying their actions was affected by a variety of contextual factors, and not religion alone. These factors in turn shaped these headteachers' perception of their religion in a professional role.

The two over-arching themes identified in Part II of Chapters 4 and 5 were (a) *Person in profession* and (b) *Religion in profession*. The first theme allowed me to capture the rich self-description of the headteachers of their personal ideology and educational practice. This description was derived from the guiding concepts, 'principles', 'actions' and 'guidance' and which were embedded in the research questions. Moreover, this theme emphasised the individual interpretation of the headteachers of (i) what leadership principles they used and whether they were informed by their religion, (ii) what were their preferred sources of guidance and (iii) what contextual factors influenced their leadership actions. The second theme *'Religion in profession'* highlighted the significance of the Muslim headteachers' own religion in a professional role as it emphasised the individual interpretation of the selected headteachers of their religion in a professional role.

In this chapter, I take a step further from the narrative case studies and the synthesis of analysis presented in Part II of Chapters 4 and 5. In doing so, I will present the comparison between MHIE and MHIP bearing in mind the multiple factors that affected the kind of principles Muslim headteachers used in their everyday leadership and the different sources from which they derived guidance for their leadership actions. In an attempt to align the two themes, (a) *Person in profession* and (b) *Religion in profession*, with the multi-level contextual framework developed in Chapter 2, I will evaluate the findings of this study in a way that the macro (societal), meso (institutional) and micro (personal) level factors which influenced the articulation of the Muslim headteachers' principles, actions and guidance are highlighted. While doing so, I will argue that the Muslim headteachers' perception and interpretation of their own religion in a leadership role varied between England and Pakistan.

This chapter is divided into three main sections; (a) the macro context, (b) the meso context and (c) the micro context. Within each of these sections, I will detail the various contextual factors that both emerged from the findings of this study and were informed by literature. As will be illustrated in the following sections, these contextual factors influenced the formation and manifestation of the Muslim headteachers' leadership principles in their actions and their preferred sources of guidance while bringing out the similarities and differences between the MHIE and MHIP. Since religion was implied in the overall focus of this research, all the contextual factors were analysed and evaluated in light of the Muslim headteachers' religion. Although religion manifested itself in various forms, it was the relationship/interaction between the headteachers' own religion *and* all other contextual factors that made this analysis more profound.

6.2. THE MACRO CONTEXT

The analysis of the findings indicated that the Muslim headteachers' perception, understanding and interpretation of their religion in a professional role varied significantly between England and Pakistan. Such a variation conforms to the distinction between Western/secular societies and traditional/religious societies proposed by Hervieu-Léger (2000), Habermas (2006) and Taylor (2007). In particular, the place accorded to religion in the public sphere of England and Pakistan, permeated the other two levels of context (meso and micro) to influence the way in which Muslim headteachers in these countries conceived, understood and interpreted their own religion in a leadership role. For the MHIE, the question about how their religion fit in with their role as a headteacher had a different interpretation as compared to the MHIP since religion, for them, was given. The manifestation of religion in the leadership role of the MHIE was expected to fit into a framework in which religion was on the outside. The MHIP, on the other hand, were confined by policies and expectations, but religion, in their case, was part of the framework. Thus, the MHIP were comfortable in expressing their religion in a leadership role since policy frameworks and religion, in Pakistan, are aligned with each other.

The place of religion in the national contexts of England and Pakistan, in general, and in education, in particular, as will be seen in the following paragraphs, was a macro-level factor that contributed to the explanation of (a) the discourse of religion used by the Muslim headteachers in both countries and (b) the differences between the two sets of headteachers in terms of expressing their religion in a professional role. While the discourse of religion and its expression had significant overlaps with the meso context, in this section I will only discuss the key macro-level factor which emerged from the findings, that is religion and culture.

6.2.1. Religion and culture

The expression of religion in the public realm of the UK, and England in particular, is contested on the grounds of (a) the decline of religion (Christianity in particular) and (b) the need to accommodate other faith populations (see Kettell, 2009; Davie, 2015). The narratives of the MHIE suggested that they were aware of the weakening in the historical intertwining between state and religion (any religion) in England. For example, according to Sajjad,

> '… the place for religion in public institutions is getting smaller and smaller, and often non-existent. It feels as if there is no place for religion in public institutions... I would say, any religion'

The common-to-all-religions discourse used by the MHIE supported Habermas's (2006) proposition of including religion in public sphere by making it more acceptable. By attributing their principles to all religions rather than Islam alone, the MHIE valued and acknowledged all faiths that were represented in their school population, even though in some schools, Muslims (as members of a minority ethnic group in England) formed a large majority of the pupil population. This affirmed Hervieu-Leger's (2000) argument that despite the fragmentation of religion in the Western societies, religion is still seen and heard in different ways. At the same time this finding contradicted Hand's argument that even though worldviews are construed as a conceptual framework that 'makes knowledge and experience possible' (Hand, 2012; p.535), they do not necessarily have to be religious. Handling religious worldviews, for the MHIE, did not appear as problematic and contested as suggested in the literature (see Hand, 2012) since they used them for the common benefit of staff and pupils in their schools.

Being conscious of the fact that they were living in a country where Islam was not the majority religion, the MHIE acknowledged only those aspects of Islam that were consistent with the

Western educational norms, namely the common values. Other aspects which potentially conflicted with western educational norms and practices were defined by the MHIE as 'culture'. The narratives of the MHIE identified various instances when they (headteachers) were challenged by Asian Muslim parents for their inability to accommodate Muslim parents' expectations regarding aspects of the curriculum which did not comply with their religious beliefs. Since the MHIE shared a similar faith *and* ethnic background with these parents, there was a 'community' expectation that the headteachers would comply with the parents' requests and assist them in such a manner that their religious values were not compromised. It is here that the headteachers decided to separate the components of religion from those of culture, as a way to deal with such situations.

By making a clear distinction between religion and culture, the MHIE took a strategic decision in order to deal with the tensions between the community they served and the educational norms of their institutions. However, as argued earlier in Chapter 2, the boundaries between culture and religion are quite blurred. The definitions of culture proposed by Geertz (1973), Hofstede (1991) and Dimmock and Walker (2000) emphasised beliefs, values and practices as the defining characteristics of the term. At the same time, the definition of religion that I espoused for this study, drawn from multiple sources (Hervieu-Leger, 2000; Durkheim, 1995; Geertz, 1973a), considered religion as a set of values and beliefs that shape the knowledge, experience and practices of people who belong to a particular religious tradition. Hence, debates about the intersectionality of culture and religion continue to be contested. Nevertheless, the MHIE did not show an awareness of this contestation. Although, I did not explore culture or its dimensions, the MHIE used it as a strategy to categorise all those aspects as culture which were in tension with Islam, such as imparting sex education and teaching pupils about LGBT issues. Such a strategic choice also reflects the difficulty these headteachers had to face while trying to

maintain a balance between the demands of the community culture, the educational culture and the societal culture of which they were part.

A study carried out by Walker and colleagues (2005) on multi-ethnic schools highlighted a number of challenges faced by the leaders of the selected schools. Amongst these, one of the major challenges for the headteachers was to deal with the issue of encouraging staff to understand the values and beliefs of ethnic cultures. Although Walker and colleagues' study focused on headteachers leading schools with a large majority of minority ethnic pupils, there was no mention of the ethnicity (and religion) of the headteachers. My research, while building on this study and other similar research studies (see Day et al., 2000; Moore, George and Halpin, 2002; Campbell, Gold and Lunt, 2003; Gold et al., 2003), provided insight into how *Muslim* headteachers understood the multi-ethnic context of their schools and used this understanding to deal with the particular challenges posed by Muslim parents. By using the concept of culture as a strategy to respond to such challenges, it seems that the headteachers endeavoured to safeguard their own religious position since according to the teachers, some Muslim parents doubted the headteachers' religious affiliation in such situations. By accepting the components of the National Curriculum which conflicted with the Muslim parents' values and beliefs, the headteachers stressed that the objective was to make Muslim parents aware of those things which were part of the British society without forcing them to change their beliefs.

The natural intertwining of state and religion in Pakistan is argued by a number of scholars and historians in the country (Richter, 1986; Khan, 1999; Durrani and Dunne, 2010b; Jalal, 2014) on the grounds that it blurs the boundaries between religion and culture while ignoring other important components of the Pakistani culture namely, 'the indigenous cultures of various linguistic regions, elements of Western culture absorbed since the days of British occupation and

distinct cultures of minority groups who form a part of the Pakistani nation' (Faiz, 1968 cited in Toor, 2011; p.110). Such an intertwining was reflected in the dominant Islamic discourse of the MHIP, which made it difficult for the MHIP to imagine themselves separate from Islam even in a professional role, thereby suggesting that religion for the MHIP was not only seen as a doctrine but a source of energy which supported their leadership actions (Habermas, 2006; Dawson, 2013). This dominance did not deter the headteachers from carrying out their professional duties and responsibilities.

The "faith-neutral" discourse used by the MHIE was a strategic choice whereby they decided to clearly differentiate between religion and culture in their effort to help Asian Muslim parents overcome their apprehensions about integrating in the British society. At the same time the MHIE tried to assimilate in the societal and educational culture without compromising their own integrity, both professional and religious. However, they were not always successful in fulfilling the parents' expectations. By contrast, the "faith-laden" discourse of the MHIP blurred the boundaries between religion and culture. Considering Islam as the 'ethical and ideological basis' (Faiz, 1968 cited in Toor, 2011; p.110) for their actions, the MHIP expressed their religion in a way that it did not take into account the religious minority students who are part of the Pakistani culture. This confirmed the compounding of the 'Muslim' and 'Pakistani' identity debated by a number of authors (see, for example, Durrani and Dunne, 2010a), which marginalised other/minority faiths in Pakistan (this will be discussed in more detail later under 'Discrimination'). The marginalisation, which appeared to be more inclined towards 'discrimination' was one example of how religion and culture overlapped in Pakistan.

Thus, if both religion and culture are to be considered as a way of life, the difference in their manifestation could be attributed to the societies of which the headteachers were part. In an

increasingly secularized society where conceiving the common views of life in relation to religious beliefs is regarded as problematic (Hervieu-Leger, 2000; Dawson, 2013), the MHIE had no choice but to separate culture from religion, and to regard the former as dispensable in the school context. Indeed this separation had strategic value for headteachers wanting to remain true to their faith and conform to the expectations of the western school system.

On the other hand, in a society where religion is regarded as a 'great central unifying force in culture' (Dawson, 2013; p.37), the MHIP did not see religion separate from culture and cultural norms were respected. For example, the act of observing *purdah* was regarded by the female headteachers as a 'cultural' rather than a 'religious' thing. This cultural manifestation of religion (in the form of observing *purdah*) applied to Muslim and Christian female students alike and, as will be explained later, the Christian students did not object to it. However, the fact that Islam is the majority religion; the state religion in Pakistan as opposed to a minority religion in England cannot be ignored when interpreting the headteachers' understanding of religion and culture. Although Islam was a shaping force that established 'a clear sense of "what is" as well as "what ought to be"' (Williams, 1996; p.370) for the MHIP, it did provide partial explanations of the behaviours and actions of the MHIE (Dimmock and Walker, 2005). The findings of this research, therefore, provided some empirical evidence for the continuing debate about the intersectionality of religion and culture, even though the debate is still unresolved.

6.3. THE MESO CONTEXT

While discussing their leadership principles and the factors influencing the formation of those principles, the narratives of the ten headteachers clearly showed that there were some similarities between the MHIE and the MHIP in terms of how they prioritised professional guidance over religious guidance when performing their leadership roles. Despite the variety of contextual factors which differed between the two countries, the way the MHIE and MHIP managed their personal religion in a professional role was somewhat similar. This similarity will be explained in the following sub-sections by emphasising those meso (institutional)-level factors which led both sets of Muslim headteachers experience similar expectations from their professional roles. The Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan had to work within a given framework of policies, rules and regulations where religion did not conflict with the delivery of their leadership responsibilities.

6.3.1. Professional expectations

Although the manifestation of leadership principles was different for MHIE and MHIP (this will be explained in detail the Micro context), headteachers in both countries were obliged to conform to the professional expectations set by their respective departments of education and reflected through government policies, rules and regulations. Such compliance to professional standards, also referred to as 'performativity' by Ball (2003b) fed into the language and discourses used by the headteachers when they illustrated their principles. However, the extent to which the 'language of performativity' (Bryan and Revell, 2011a) was linked to the headteachers' own principles varied slightly for the two sets of headteachers. While the MHIE

found some room for manoeuvre in the policy framework prescribed by the local authorities and government, their Pakistani counterparts used the term 'government servant' for themselves to describe the extent to which they were constrained by the rules and regulations framework.

In both cases, the headteachers in the two countries experienced a kind of 'values schizophrenia' (Ball, 2003; p.221) as they felt pressured to sacrifice their personal values and authenticity (in raising standards of education in their respective schools) for acting professionally. The potential split between the headteachers' desire to exercise their own principles and the sense of accountability towards their profession was reflected in their discourse, especially when the language of principles they used matched the various policy documents constructed for state schools. Drawing from Ball's definition of a 'performative worker', the selected headteachers were conscious to respond to 'targets, indicators and evaluations' while expressing their passion to do the best for their schools (Ball, 2003b, p.215). The MHIE had internalised the standards and policy guidelines as their own principles, whereas the MHIP explicitly linked their leadership principles to the statutory guidance. Therefore, conforming to the professional expectations set by their respective departments of education was a similarity between the MHIE and MHIP.

For both MHIE *and* MHIP, professional guidance almost always took precedence for carrying out a professional role. However, the difference between the two sets of headteachers was the *extent* to which they acknowledged professional guidance as a foundation for their leadership principles. On the one hand the importance of professional guidance was acknowledged by all headteachers between the two countries. On the other hand, religious guidance also informed the headteachers' professionalism. In the following paragraphs, I will illustrate the differences that existed between the Muslim headteachers in both countries in terms of the impact of religion on the headteachers' professionalism.

The answer to the question, 'While leading your school, do you take guidance from any particular source?' was answered in quite a similar way by the MHIE and the MHIP. The commonly cited sources of professional guidance for both sets of headteachers were the [respective] Departments of Education, National Curriculum, professional development programmes, policies, rules and regulations prescribed by the government, peer networks, and current research studies. When investigated about whether any guidance was taken from their religion, Islam, the headteachers' responses differed both within the countries, as well as between the countries. The MHIE mostly equated 'religion' with 'morals'. Regarding religion and morality as synonymous, the MHIE formed principles which were not only acceptable to Muslim pupils, staff and community but also catered to people of other faiths. Although the MHIE described religious guidance as a foundation for their leadership principles, this guidance 'stretched across all religions' (Khalid). Therefore, the extent to which these headteachers valued their own religious identity (Modood, 2015) and whether they were able to confirm their adherence to Islam as proposed in the Swann Report (1985) was not clear. The professional sources of guidance were almost always in the foreground for MHIE as they attempted to align the guidance drawn from their religion with the multicultural environment in their schools. Such an assimilation of professional and religious guidance reflected the challenge faced by these headteachers in maintaining a balance between the educational culture and their own integrity.

The principles resulting from professional (and religious) guidance included 'compassion', 'patience', 'humanity' and 'empathy'. Since these principles allowed the MHIE the 'liberal mindedness' (Khalid) needed to accept people from all faith backgrounds as well as supported them in a professional role, there seemed to be no tension between the headteachers' professional and religious principles. The relationship that was highlighted in the responses of the MHIE between their principles and guidance, provided a stepping stone for a detailed

inquiry about these headteachers' professional and religious identity; a field which is scarcely researched considering the contested status of Islam in a religiously and culturally plural England (Revell, 2012; Stringer, 2013).

The MHIP declared religion as the 'main source of guidance' for every aspect of their life, including their professional life. The way in which MHIP aligned their leadership role with their religion was reflected in their responses, especially when they expressed that religion was the most important source of guidance for them in all matters of life. However, like the MHIE, for professional matters, the MHIP also prioritised professional guidance over religious guidance. But, looking at the way the MHIP described religion as a source of guidance, it was difficult to untangle the religious component of guidance from the professional one. The understanding that 'real guidance comes from religion' (Malik) was reflected in the narratives of all MHIP. Islam for these headteachers was a belief system which was embedded in their lives in a way that (a) they could not see themselves without it and (b) they did not feel the need to separate religion from profession. Thus, on the one hand the headteachers' increased emphasis on Islam affirmed the unification of the national and religious identity of the MHIP (Jalal, 2014); while on the other hand, it evidenced how these headteachers had internalised the similarity between Islam and Pakistan's ideology and how they were determined to hold on to it (Afzal, 2013).

Although the MHIP felt circumscribed within the rules and regulations framework developed by the PED, religion continued to be viewed, by most selected headteachers, as a source of spiritual strength which helped them resolve even the 'most trivial matters' (Aziza). At the same time the MHIP emphasised religious guidance derived from the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), there was one instance where a headteacher (Malik) was faced with a dilemma where he had to balance religious guidance with professional guidance. For example,

Malik had to compromise the *taraweeh* prayers in the holy month of Ramadan as he was directed by the Chief Minister of Punjab to take his entire staff for a cricket match. The match was a charity event and was scheduled at a time when people had to go to the mosque to read *taraweeh* prayers. Since Malik felt 'bound' to follow state orders, he reduced the length of the prayers while conducting them inside the school, instead of in a mosque, and ensured that all members of staff accompanied him to the match afterwards. Thus, by finding a solution to such a dilemma, Malik exhibited both his creativity as well as sensitivity to safeguard his own religious principles *and* those of his colleagues. Another peculiar case, an 'outlier', in the sample of headteachers in Pakistan, was Ehsan as he was cautious about using religious guidance as a base for his leadership principles:

> '… this is a public-sector institution; it's not my own personal institution nor of any trust. So, I can apply only those rules here which are passed on to us by the government… we do not apply any personal rules or beliefs' (Ehsan)

An 'outlier' in the English sample of headteachers was Sajjad. While most MHIE were implicit about the extent to which they derived guidance from their religion, Sajjad correlated his morality with his faith:

> '… there is a lot of sole-searching that goes on, and for me, that's to do with faith… I always kind of sole-search and ask myself, 'as a Muslim, have I done the right thing?', have I been true to my ideals as a Muslim, my beliefs as a Muslim? it's kind of like my moral compass. So my decision-making has to be underpinned by that morality, and that morality comes from faith'. (Sajjad)

Sajjad's understanding and interpretation of religion in a professional role suggested that no two Muslims were alike. The two examples of 'outliers' show that each individual headteacher in the sample (both in England and Pakistan) used and interpreted religion in their own unique way while trying to act as a responsible professional. Therefore, the headteachers' lived experiences and their relationship with the situational contexts, reflected in their narrative interpretations, were 'implicative' (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996; p.456). This means that the 'interpretive

conceptions' the Muslim headteachers had of their religion and profession, 'implied' that various contextual factors interacted with one another to 'negotiate a meaningful action' (Gronn and Ribbins, 1996; p.455), which made them all different from one another.

The Muslim headteachers' compliance with, and assimilation of, the professional expectations was expressed by the participating teachers in the sample schools, in England and Pakistan, in different ways. While teachers in Pakistan synonymised their own and their headteachers' principles with government 'rules and regulations', teachers in England described their own principles and later affirmed that they also used the principles established by their respective headteachers. However, there was one exception. For example, in one of the schools in West Midlands (Ahmad's school), the selected teachers for the focus group interview were all Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) who had joined the school recently and did not have much experience of Ahmad's leadership (as already explained in Chapter 3). Thus, in the case of England, factors such as position and length of service influenced the way teachers understood and experienced the leadership principles of MHIE.

In the case of Pakistan, however, the institutional culture appeared as a contextual factor which shaped the teachers' views about the leadership principles of MHIP. Taking into account the multiple perspectives of teachers in the selected schools reinforced the importance of context in understanding school leadership. The 'common narratives' of the selected MHIP and the teachers in their schools had parallels with the findings of Afzal's report on 'Education and Attitudes in Pakistan: Understanding Perceptions on Terrorism' (Afzal, 2013). Although the objectives of this report were quite different compared to my research, the similarity between the headteachers' and teachers' perception of their leadership principles had some resemblance with the author's analysis where she held the current educational system (state school system in

particular) in Pakistan accountable for the teachers' and students' inability 'to question and critique' (Afzal, 2013; p. 13) the policy framework surrounding the schools. The MHIP found it hard to critically reflect on their own principles and perceived the government rules and regulations as a hindrance in carrying out their leadership roles.

The intertwining of the personal and professional persona of the headteachers (in both countries) as they expressed their leadership principles and sources of guidance, suggested a continuous interplay between the personal (micro) and institutional (meso) levels of context. That is, the obligation to conform to professional expectations, found in both sets of headteachers, interacted with the 'situated' and 'external' contexts (Braun, Ball, Maguire and Hoskins, 2011) to yield leadership principles that were quite similar for MHIE and MHIP. Braun et al. (2011) described the 'situated' level of context as 'historically and locationally' linked to the school. This was particularly relevant to the English schools whose multi-cultural environment had a significant impact on the headteachers' leadership principles. The 'external' context which, according to Braun et al. (2011), comprised local and national policy matters, evaluation criteria and support from local education authorities applied to the headteachers in both countries. However, the MHIP were more vocal in relating these external factors to their leadership principles, than the MHIE.

6.3.2. Diversity in schools

The 'contextualised perspectives' (Truong and Hallinger, 2015) of the Muslim headteachers, as they explained the source of their leadership principles, proved to be the basis of an 'emically-oriented' approach to understand the social phenomenon 'through the eyes of [the] subjects' (Helfrich, 1999; p.132). In other words, the Muslim headteachers' explanation of how they

formed their principles and what role their religion played in the formation could not be separated from their individual national contexts. For example, in the case of England, the Muslim headteachers were regarded as an ethnic minority group. Moreover, the institutions they were leading were non-denominational (without a religious character). Therefore, while interpreting the relationship between leadership principles and their own faith, the English headteachers were conscious of the secular and multicultural environment in their respective schools.

In England, principles such as diversity, equality, integration and developing a harmonious community were established and expressed as a result of the multicultural environment in which the MHIE worked. While MHIP felt constrained in using their own principles, none of the selected headteachers in England conveyed such a feeling when using these principles in their everyday leadership. One possible reason that explains this finding is the fact that the discourse of leadership principles used by MHIE was quite similar to the content of their respective policy documents. Although the headteachers did not explicitly say where the language of their principles came from, the similarity suggested that they had derived it from the professional guidance and it had become part of their everyday speech. Thus, the professional guidance, in this case, shifted into principles in a way that it was no longer considered 'guidance' by the headteachers. Instead, they internalised the professional guidance to the extent of calling it their own principles.

While a lot of principles used by the MHIE (such as diversity, equality, and integration) suggested that these headteachers were aware of the diverse and multicultural composition of their schools, there was very little evidence of leadership principles articulated by the MHIP that particularly responded to the religious and sectarian diversity that existed in the selected schools.

Although the principle of 'fairness' implied dealing with everyone in a fair manner, the MHIP did not put much effort into catering for the needs of minority Christian students, especially their religious (as opposed to educational) needs. For example, Malik justified his inability to respond to the 'religious needs' of Christian students in his school by saying that he believed his own faith would be compromised while doing so. Additionally, he confessed that Christian students were not very open in expressing their religious needs in the school. Waseem, on the other hand, was quite vocal about the impact of the religious background of students on his leadership principles. For example, he believed that he would not feel comfortable if he was appointed as a headteacher in a school where Muslims were in a minority. In the same manner, he professed that Christian students in his school would find themselves misfits too.

Keeping these examples in perspective, the question arises as to how the MHIP justified such perceptions about Christian students when at the same time, they claimed that Islam taught them to treat people of other faiths with kindness without insulting their religious beliefs and values. Interestingly, none of the Christian students in the focus groups (it was very rare to have a Christian student in a focus group as they were present in very small numbers in the selected schools) reported any incident of discrimination. Although this finding refutes the work of many authors who write about the issue of religious intolerance in the Pakistani society (Rahman, 2003, 2010; Hussain, Salim and Arif, 2011; Hussain and Safiq, 2016), one may be able to argue that religious minority students have internalised the discrimination and consider it 'normal'. Since these students do not feel encouraged to discuss their religious needs, neither teachers nor the headteachers consider it important to probe them about such needs.

The only example given by all the five MHIP which reflected that some religious needs of the minority Christian students were met was the provision in the curriculum for these students for

studying Ethics instead of Islamiat. However, there was no evidence, in the selected schools, of the minority Christian students opting to study Ethics. Therefore, even though the provision was made, it is possible that these students were unable to recognise this option as an element of discrimination. Another likely explanation for the minority Christian students not being able to identify any discrimination could be that at the local school-level of interaction and engagement, everyone is collegial and therefore the minority students consider the school as a safe haven. However, these arguments and their possible interpretations are questions for further research as they do not fit in the scope of this study. This research aimed to understand how Muslim headteachers made use of their religion in forming leadership principles which influenced Muslim and Christian students alike.

The preceding paragraphs illustrated the interrelationship between the Muslim headteachers' religion and the various contextual factors at the macro and meso levels, which influenced the formation of their leadership principles and subsequent actions. I will now consider the various micro (personal)-level factors and their relationship with the Muslim headteachers' own religion to understand how they influenced what leadership principles informed their actions and the sources from which they derived guidance.

6.4. THE MICRO CONTEXT

The Muslim headteachers' understanding and interpretation of their principles, actions and guidance were influenced by a variety of factors that characterised the contexts in which they practiced their leadership. At the micro level, a number of factors influenced the way headteachers in both countries perceived their religion in a professional role. These include the

Muslim headteachers' (a) personal values and beliefs, (b) religion and religiosity and (c) personal attributes.

6.4.1. Personal values and beliefs

The importance of personal values of the MHIE and MHIP, as part of the micro (personal)-level context, was highlighted in the literature review and a number of studies have been cited which aimed to ascertain the importance of values in a leadership role (Day et al., 2000; Blair, 2002; Gold et al., 2003; Walker et al., 2005). However, as mentioned earlier, there was not much evidence in these studies about the source from which the headteachers derived these values. Considering religion as a set of values and beliefs, I aimed to investigate, in my research, the principles employed by headteachers in both countries *as well as* the sources to which they attributed their principles. Keeping in mind the diverse national contexts of England and Pakistan, I drew on Bush and Glover's (2003) Contingency Theory of leadership to observe how religion as a contingent factor influenced the way MHIE and MHIP conceptualised their leadership principles, actions and sources of guidance in their respective educational contexts.

The MHIE and the MHIP used a similar language to describe their leadership principles. For example, some common principles used by headteachers in both countries were mutual consultation, cooperation, working collaboratively, improving the lives of students, respect, dignity, compassion, empathy, fairness, honesty integrity and humanity. While the actual principles were similar, their manifestation in the headteachers' actions were different between the two countries. For example, while describing their leadership principles, the MHIE linked them with moral, rather than religious values. However, even while being covert about associating their leadership principles with Islam, the MHIE affirmed that their morals were

grounded in their faith. This finding confirmed Cooling's (2012) and Sullivan's (2012) argument that religious faith is not clutter; that is, the common set of values shared by all religions can be brought to surface and each member of the society can learn from one another without having to isolate themselves owing to the diverse religious views.

One of the MHIE (Laiba) illustrated in her narrative that in faith schools, it was easy to relate the leadership principles to a particular faith. However, in non-faith (schools without a religious character) schools, one could only contribute leadership principles to a 'moral code of conduct'. Similarly, Khalid demonstrated reflexivity towards his own religion while acknowledging the importance of all other religions. Such a faith-neutral language used by the MHIE while associating their leadership principles to moral rather than religious beliefs and values, amongst other things, reflected these headteachers' understanding of the multi-faith schools which they were leading (this has been explained previously in the section 'Diversity in schools') where they were 'expected' to value all religions rather than their own.

Remaining alert to the specific context of the selected English schools which were characterised by religious, cultural and ethnic diversity, the responses of the MHIE (in relation to religion and religiosity) seemed to provide answers to some questions raised in a report, which was prepared for the National College of Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) on leading multi-ethnic schools in 2005. The report highlighted (a) the importance of understanding school leadership in a school-specific context and (b) multiple perspectives of the leadership team about leading schools with substantial number of minority ethnic pupils (Walker et al., 2005). While the headteachers of the case study schools (in Walker et al.'s study) emphasised the articulation and implementation of personal values and beliefs, the findings could not provide an answer to the question, 'how value-driven leadership will be affected if headteachers were to derive their values from their

religion?'. Although the idea of exploring value-driven leadership was similar to my research project, what made my research distinct was the fact that I was interested to find out the source to which the headteachers attributed their values, and in particular if the headteachers' faith had any impact on the articulation of these values.

As compared to MHIE, MHIP described the sources of their leadership principles in quite a different way. Religion, for the MHIP, was almost impulsively declared as a foundation for their leadership principles by all the selected headteachers. Religion, and in particular the life of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was regarded by all headteachers as the primary source of guidance. Principles such as 'honesty', 'leniency' and 'working sincerely in a professional role' were grounded in the headteachers' 'religious beliefs and values' and all of them envisaged Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) as their role model. While the MHIP could not imagine themselves separate from Islam (Khan, 1999), the extent to which they considered religion important in a professional role was slightly different for all five headteachers. Nevertheless, the MHIP placed equal emphasis on their religion *and* religiosity (Hage and Posner, 2015). The differences in the manifestation of headteachers' leadership principles in England and Pakistan endorsed the idea of contingent leadership proposed by Bush and Glover (2003) since the headteachers' actions were shaped in response to the unique circumstances they faced in their respective school contexts. Thus the 'contingent characteristic of school leadership' (Hallinger, 2003; p.346) was borne out by the findings of this study as the Muslim headteachers conceptualised their actions to match the changing needs of the contexts in which they worked.

In England, the covert expression of religion by the headteachers led them to encounter both 'positive' and 'negative' discrimination; terms which resonated with the findings of one of the pioneer projects on black and minority ethnic (BME) school leaders in the UK (see Bush,

Glover and Sood, 2006). Although the focus of my research was not to find any evidence of discrimination that the MHIE experienced, being part of the BME group *and* being affiliated with Islam, led them to narrate instances which challenged their faith *and* ethnicity to the extent that they would question their own beliefs and identity as Asian Muslim headteachers. Such instances, as appeared in the narratives, involved pupils, parents and the media. Since context was of prime importance in this research to understand how the selected headteachers dealt with the multicultural and multi-ethnic environment in their respective schools, a discussion of the above-mentioned types of discrimination is important.

Some examples of 'positive' discrimination experienced by the MHIE appeared in the accounts of the selected pupils and teachers who participated in the focus groups. These examples reflected how the ethnicity and religion of the MHIE, especially when it matched with those of the pupils led to a 'perceived advantage' (see Bush et al., 2005; p.49). Two instances commonly cited by most of the headteachers, pupils and teachers were (a) provision made for Muslim pupils (and members of staff) for Friday prayers and (b) serving *halal* food in the school. Although the pupils in the focus groups (especially secondary school pupils) linked these provisions with the fact that the headteachers were Muslims, the headteachers themselves reported them in a way that reflected their principle of managing diversity in their schools more than it emphasised their religion. The discourse of multiculturalism and diversity, often used by the MHIE, therefore, enabled them to understand the religious and cultural needs of the pupils without having to go against their own religious principles. While the former was explicit in the headteachers' narratives, the latter was only implied.

The 'negative' discrimination reported by the headteachers in this research did not exactly match with Bush et al. (2005)'s findings since the focus of their research was to identify the barriers

experienced by BME school leaders in the UK. My research aimed to find out the various factors that influenced the leadership actions of a particular form of BME leaders. The typical 'negative' discrimination, in terms of recruitment and selection, was experienced by the MHIE in their process of becoming headteachers. A peculiar form of 'negative' discrimination faced by the MHIE resulted from the THC. Though not formally investigated during the interviews, the THC was mentioned a number of times by the MHIE and their interpretation of it suggested that they became part of the controversy owing to their faith identity. However, in this particular instance, the media, the local authorities (LAs) and the DfE challenged their Muslim identity rather than the parents and/or pupils. While the schools selected for this study were not labelled as "Trojan Horse" schools, the MHIE were tainted for being *Muslims*. The way the MHIE dealt with this controversy, suggested that not only did they feel responsible for dealing with such allegations targeted at Muslim professionals in education, but also, they were determined to remove any stereotypes against Muslims in general.

In Pakistan, the overt expression of religion by the headteachers led to a covert discrimination of religious minority students, in particular Christians. The religious discourse of the headteachers, manifested in their desire to make students in their care good Muslims, was taken positively by both students and teachers. One reason for the conformity between what the headteachers said and how it was experienced by staff and students was the fact that the religion of the headteachers matched the religion of the majority in their schools. Nevertheless, the provisions made for religious minority students suggested some form of discrimination against them. These included the option of studying Ethics as an alternative subject to Islamiat. However, the MHIP unanimously reported that none of the Christian students opted to study Ethics. The most commonly cited reason was that Christian students found it easy to learn the content of the Islamiat syllabus along with their Muslim peers. But one of the headteachers, Ehsan, was of the

opinion that the reason why Christian students opted out of Ethics was because 'they [Christian students] did not want to separate their identity from the rest and liked to study what other students were studying in the class'. The compounding of the national and the religious identities, which led to the issue of 'identity-separation' raised, did not seem to be confined to the study of Ethics alone.

The fact that religious minority students did not express their 'religious needs' (narrated by Malik) implied that these students did not want to see or think of themselves as the 'others'. Considering that the choice of 'going-with-the-flow' was their own, to what extent can these two examples then be used as evidence to prove that the country's education system, pervaded by Islam, has led to the isolation of religious minority students? As emphasised earlier, such an exploration requires special expertise and a different focus altogether. Keeping the purpose of this research project in mind, I was particularly keen to understand how the headteachers' own religion influenced the way they dealt with religious minority students. Therefore, on the one hand, Ehsan's observation about Christian students feeling obligated to 'be like other students' suggested some degree of 'otherness' among these students. But on the other hand, the headteachers acknowledged that they were obliged to follow the guidance from their religion when dealing with religious minority students (see Case Studies of Malik, Aziza and Waseem). Thus, the hegemonic discourse of the principles of fairness and equality, also linked to the headteachers' own religion, allowed them to include minority faith students in an education system dominated by Islam, in the best possible manner.

6.4.2. Religion and religiosity

As Shah and colleagues pointed out (Shah, 2006b, 2009; Shah and Shaikh, 2010; Shah, 2016b; a), the increasing diasporas of Muslims within UK had increased the diversity in the ideological perspectives of Muslims in general, and Muslim educational leaders in particular. Thus, the extent to which the five MHIE adhered to, or departed from Islamic leadership principles differed for each headteacher depending on their varying levels of personal religious inclination/personal religiosity. A micro-(personal) level factor, the personal religiosity of the MHIE interacted with the school context and resulted in the headteachers associating their principles to Islam in a covert ('not outfacing' – Khalid) way. While Hage and Posner's (2015) study failed to determine the underlying reasons for the minor role religiosity played in the leadership practices of Muslims, the findings from the present study suggested that the institutional culture of the schools outplayed the intensity of the religious commitment of the MHIE. This was evident when the MHIE expressed the formation of their leadership principles in a way that portrayed Islam as 'tying with everyone else's faith' (Laiba). The emphasis placed by the MHIE on 'moral beliefs' (Mona) rather than religious principles (as discussed earlier) reflected the headteachers' understanding that their faith might/might not be the same as the staff and pupils in their schools.

The way MHIP emphasised their religion while describing their leadership principles was quite similar to the studies mentioned in Chapter 2 (see Khaki, 2005; Baig, 2011; Branson, Baig and Begum, 2015). In particular, the link between the selected headteachers' religion, their level of religiosity and the subsequent formation of principles supports the findings of Branson et al's study in providing evidence of the importance of headteachers' principles (grounded in their faith) in developing students' 'pro-social behaviour' and strengthening their Islamic faith

(Branson, Baig and Begum, 2015; p.112). However, while emphasising the role of Islamic leadership principles in creating a school-wide disciplinary climate, Branson et al's study ignored how religious minority students (and staff) in schools were influenced by such principles. The attribution of leadership principles to Islam in relation to strengthening the Islamic faith of the students, questioned the accommodation of the needs and concerns of the minority religious group of students.

Unlike their counterparts, the MHIE did not find religiosity (extent of devotion to one's religious faith followed by 'adherence to the principals and standards of that faith) as significant as their religious affiliation (self-identification as Muslims) to Islam. Owing to the 'emic' approach I took for this study to understand the Muslim headteachers' perceptions of their religion and their leadership actions in their specific contexts *only*, it became evident that the interpretation of religion and religiosity differed significantly for MHIE and MHIP. The varying degree of personal religiosity was reflected in the nuanced responses of the MHIE when they associated their religion with their leadership principles. Such nuanced responses also offered an explanation for the headteachers' awareness of (a) the growing number of Muslim students in British schools and the resulting expectations of Muslim community members that school leaders should understand the diverse needs of Muslim youth, and (b) the religious, ethnic and cultural diversity within the selected schools, which explained why the headteachers acknowledged the importance of religion but at the same time, were cautious of emphasising it too much. Thus, the interpretation of religion and religiosity implied that the MHIE articulated their leadership principles to respond to the diverse needs of Muslim pupils in their schools as well as remaining alert to the needs of pupils belonging to other faiths.

In England, the use of a common-to-all-religions discourse by the MHIE reflected their inclination towards being covert about their religion. Referring to Bryan and Revell's (2011) study where Christian RE teachers considered the relationship between their faith and profession problematic, the authors proposed some reasons for the behaviour of the selected RE teachers (see Bryan and Revell, 2011; p. 147). While resonating with Cooling's (2010) and Hand's (Hand, 2012, 2014) debate on doing God in education, these reasons also explained the 'marginalisation' of faith by the MHIE. The evidence for such marginalisation was provided by the MHIE, through their use of a common-to-all-religions discourse. In so doing, Habermas's (2006) proposition of being reflexive on one's own faith position was also reflected in the responses of the MHIE. While being accepting of all faiths *and* showing neutrality towards their own faith, Islam, the MHIE did not feel the need to 'split their identity into a public and a private part' (Habermas, 2006; p.10). Thus, even though the leadership principles of MHIE were mostly secular, they did not hide their identity as a [Pakistani] Muslim. Religion, for most MHIE, might not be outfacing, but it was there. The teachers and pupils in the selected schools were also aware of their headteachers' religious identity. One of the teachers in Khalid's school stated that the headteacher's religion was not important for his own sake. Rather, it was important because it matched the religion of the majority pupils in the school.

Although religion did not supersede their professional responsibilities, the MHIP did not consider religion as 'external' to their everyday lives. There were no instances reported in the narratives of the MHIP where, according to Habermas (2006), they felt the need to show 'neutrality' towards other faiths or even their own faith. The 'internalisation' of Islam, reflected in the discourse of religion, was evident in the narratives of five MHIP. The dictates of Islam appeared to affect the behaviour of the MHIP, personally as well as professionally. Following religion in a personal space was a norm for them; however, even in a public space, in particular

the government schools they worked in, the narratives of the MHIP revealed that they put considerable emphasis on Islam and nationalism.

While the public discourse of religion used by the MHIE reflected their awareness of the increasing religious diversity in their respective schools, in Pakistan, the case was opposite. Following that Islam is the declared religion of the State (as stated in the Article 2 of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan), all systems of governance in the country largely favour the majority religious group, the Muslims. Even the National Education Policy uses Islam 'as the main signifier of Pakistani identity' (Durrani and Dunne, 2010b; p.222). This explains, to a large extent, why the MHIP, while talking about their understanding of religion in a professional role, saw themselves, their profession and their religion aligned with each other. The open expression of religion benefitted the MHIP in two ways. Firstly, the way they brought religion in a professional role through the use of an Islam-dominant discourse reflected their sense of accountability towards God for being good Muslims. Such an interpretation suggested a theological understanding of religion, following which, the MHIP tried to act in compliance with the teachings of Islam. Secondly, the use of Islamic discourse was also beneficial to the teachers and students since all five schools were Muslim majority schools. Rather than using a faith-neutral discourse, the headteachers freely expressed their desire to make the students in their schools, good human beings *and* good Muslims.

This desire suggested that the MHIP treated all students (whether they were Muslims, Christians, *Sunnis* or *Shias*) equally. However, it also raised some important questions regarding the inclusion and accommodation of religious (and sectarian) minority students. For example, if a headteacher (Malik) felt inclined to inculcate Islamic values in the students and if the female headteachers (Rabia and Aziza) tried to encourage girls in their schools to observe *purdah*, to what extent did

minority faith students feel they were allowed to exercise the right to practise their religion in their own way? Similarly, if the headteachers' desire to make students good Muslims was expressed in response to the National Curriculum which aims to nurture Islam and nationalism among the students, how do minority faith students fit in this objective?

Such questions had the potential of leading the discussion to the contested debate of the provisions granted to religious minorities in Pakistan, such as their protection, equality and respect and the role of state schools in making these provisions. Nevertheless, this research did not aim to investigate the inclusion/exclusion of minority faith students as influenced by the Islamisation of the National Curriculum. While such an investigation calls for a specialised focus on the National Curriculum, my research did not look at any such constituents of the National Curriculum. Rather, the discussion about the National Curriculum was included in this section in response to the headteachers' (and some teachers') understanding and interpretation of it. Thus, the answers to the afore-mentioned questions, were partly provided by the headteachers themselves and partly by the teachers and students when they were asked to express their views about how they experienced the headteachers' leadership *and* religion in their respective schools.

Unlike the MHIP who did not recognise the diversity (however little it was) in their schools, the expression of religion by the MHIE reflected their awareness of the local contexts of their respective schools which comprised teachers and pupils coming from different faith and ethnic backgrounds. Such an awareness also led the MHIE to be cautious about expressing their religion in a professional role. Even the teachers and pupils who participated in the focus group discussions regarded their headteachers' religion as a private matter which had little or no space in a professional role. For them, being a headteacher was more important than being a *Muslim* headteacher. With such strong views in place, it seemed then that the headteachers' covert

expression of religion was a *reactive* rather than a *proactive* action. In other words, not only were the MHIE aware of the statutory guidance in terms of using and promoting any faith-based beliefs in their profession, but they were also conscious about fulfilling the expectations of the staff and pupils in their schools. This affirms the importance of context, which was identified earlier in the review of literature as it exerted influence over the headteachers' leadership practices (see for example, Bush and Glover, 2003; Gronn and Ribbins, 1996; Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Hallinger and Leithwood, 1996). In particular, the headteachers' compliance with state guidelines and their sensitivity towards the multi-faith and multi-cultural environment in the schools clearly illustrated the important role of context in shaping their actions and responses (Walker et al., 2005).

6.4.3. Personal attributes

The formation of the Muslim headteachers' leadership principles was also influenced by the 'situation at hand', a finding which reinforced the idea of contingency in leadership (Bush and Glover, 2003). While the principles formed in response to a given situation were contingent on that situation, they revealed some personal attributes of the Muslim headteachers in both countries. As described in Part II of Chapter 4, all five MHIE experienced a challenging situation at some point in their career trajectories. The narratives of these headteachers (Part I, Chapter 4) evidenced that most of these situations concerned dealing with some form of diversity. For example, the two female headteachers narrated instances in which they tried to cope with their leadership responsibilities by *conforming to the male norms* of being a leader (Coleman, 2007). Such instances involved parents (Asian Muslim in particular) denying the authority of the two female headteachers, Laiba and Mona, and not giving them respect during parent-teacher meetings. By portraying themselves as 'determined' headteachers, the female headteachers' responses

suggested that they needed to prove their worth by showing resilience towards the challenges they faced as leaders of their schools.

While the female MHIE faced some gender stereotypes in their leadership roles, the male MHIE were challenged for their ethnicity and religion. For example, Sajjad was criticised by a Muslim parent for not coming up to the expectations of the parents just because he was an 'Asian Muslim'. Similarly, Ahmad faced a dilemma when Muslim parents would expect him to help them convince their daughters to discontinue their education on the grounds that they were Muslims. In such circumstances, the MHIE managed diversity (gender, ethnic and religious) through context-specific and context-sensitive personality traits which were not linked to either masculine or feminine labels.

Both MHIE and MHIP refuted the simplistic dichotomy of male /female attributes (Brinia, 2011). The only difference was the way in which gender was manifested in the segregated primary schools which could only be led by female headteachers. In a research conducted to compare men and women school leaders in primary schools in Greece, Brinia (2012) identified some gender-related differences between male and female headteachers. Some 'female' characteristics observed by Brinia in her study, such as emotionality, sensitivity, intuition and submission, matched the rationale of the Punjab Education Department (PED) in Pakistan for selecting only female headteachers for primary schools. This rationale applied to both single-sex (female) and co-education primary schools in the province as the authorities considered female headteachers more apt for communicating with mothers. Additionally, the female headteachers selected for the study observed *purdah*. While veiling and leadership were not seen as contradictory for these headteachers (Shah, 2010), what challenged them more in their leadership roles was the bureaucracy they faced when dealing with management and administrative issues in

the school. Hence, the contextualised perspectives of the MHIP not only defined the contexts in which they worked, but also described how the contexts influenced and shaped their leadership actions. Prioritising the interpretation of the headteachers while they constructed the meaning of their leadership principles and actions also allowed me to give due consideration to the differences in the national contexts, particularly in relation to religion.

6.5. SUMMARY

The comparison presented in this chapter aimed to show the similarities and differences in the way Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan perceived religion in their leadership roles and how different contextual factors helped explain these. The contextualisation affirmed the idea of contingency leadership proposed by Bush and Glover (2003) and many others who advocate understanding school leadership in a specific context. While interpreting the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers and their religion, a number of contextual factors were highlighted, most of which were identified earlier in the literature. These factors were particularly viewed through the multi-level contextual framework and their discussion revealed that the three levels, macro, meso and micro interacted with one another *and* the Muslim headteachers' own religion to influence their leadership actions. Thus, religion as the main focus of this research project, was embedded in all three levels of context.

The analysis and evaluation of the findings of this research project has contributed to the advancement of three key theoretical debates reviewed in the literature. Firstly, the importance of values in school leadership was acknowledged and affirmed by numerous scholars (Day et al., 2000; Day, Harris and Hadfield, 2001a; Grace, 1995, 2000; Blair, 2002; Campbell, Gold and Lunt, 2003; Gold et al., 2003; Greenfield, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2009; Yukl, 2013). Taking a step

forward, the present study provided empirical evidence of the source to which headteachers could attribute their values to while performing their leadership roles. In particular, I debated the conceptualisation of leadership values and practices of *Muslim* headteachers while highlighting the complex interplay between religion (as a set of values and beliefs) and educational leadership.

Secondly, most cross-cultural comparative studies on school leadership used culture as a tool of analysis to compare the leadership practices of headteachers in different countries (Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Dimmock and Walker, 1998a; b; Cheong, 2000; Walker and Dimmock, 2002; Hallinger, 2003; Hofstede and Bond, 1984). These authors developed cross-cultural models to explain school leaders' behaviours and actions while focusing on the cultural dimensions of societies and institutions. However, religion as a variable of culture was not given much attention. By arguing that there is a need to understand religion as an independent aspect of culture, I problematised the fact that the debate on the interplay between culture and religion (and Islam and culture in particular) remains unresolved in educational leadership literature. This was illustrated in the macro context analysis presented in this chapter. Nevertheless, contrary to prior studies, religion as an independent variable was reviewed and analysed in detail at the three levels of context, macro (societal), meso (institutional) and micro (personal).

Finally, while staying within the Contingency Theory (Bush and Glover, 2003) as my overarching theoretical understanding, I argued that religion can be regarded as a contingent variable that school leaders should be sensitive to. Emphasising the importance of context in understanding school leadership in two different national contexts, this theory was sensitive to the dynamism of comparative studies on school leadership and it helped explain the way headteachers responded to diverse and unique organisational circumstances in England and Pakistan.

Keeping in mind the importance of context, comparing Muslim headteachers in England and Pakistan highlighted a number of similarities and differences between them. While several of these similarities and differences were common between headteachers in each country, there were nuanced differences which made each headteacher unique. In particular, there were outliers in each set of headteachers based on their understanding and interpretation of religion. Comparing the headteachers' experiences with the multiple perspectives of teachers and students helped in locating the headteachers' perceptions of their leadership 'in the context of the views of significant others' (Ribbins and Gronn, 2000; p.41).

Summing up the comparison, the most noteworthy differences between the MHIE and MHIP were:

a) The MHIP 'lived and breathed' Islam whereas the MHIE expressed their religion in a covert way.

b) The MHIP 'declared' religion as their primary source of guidance whereas the MHIE marginalised their faith position to act in a 'politically correct' way.

c) The MHIP did not feel the need to separate religion from their profession, whereas the MHIE chose to keep their religion separate from their profession.

As for the similarities, headteachers in both countries prioritised their profession over their personal religion when it came to performing their leadership role. They assimilated professional guidance from 'professional' sources and their leadership principles reflected the language of the statutory guidance. The selected teachers' and pupils' also confirmed their awareness of the professional expectations that the headteachers had to fulfil. Although this comparison enabled me to group the Muslim headteachers in their respective national contexts while drawing out the similarities and differences between them, these findings cannot be generalised since the Muslim

headteachers who participated in this study were self-selected. Nevertheless, the detailed portraits of the headteachers' leadership roles and their interpretation of religion strengthens the case to understand school leadership in a particular context while taking into account as many contextual factors as possible.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1. REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

This thesis has made an original contribution to knowledge by presenting the narratives of Muslim headteachers comprising the perceptions, interpretations and experiences of their religion. As with any other research, my journey was also full of surprises, challenges and lessons. That I was a Pakistani Muslim who had lived and worked in Pakistan for all her life, was both challenging as well as helpful in different ways. The identity of a 'researcher' was perhaps more overwhelming than a shared identity of a 'Pakistani Muslim'. Thus, accessing the Muslim headteachers, both in England and Pakistan, was not as easy as I had anticipated. Nevertheless, my belief that 'perseverance commands success' helped me steer my way through this challenging, yet exciting journey.

In England, I travelled across Birmingham and London in pursuit of finding Muslim headteachers. But my journeys were not always fruitful. There were stories narrated by some Muslim headteachers who were interested in participating in my research, yet a number of 'external' factors constrained them from doing so. As a sign of respect, I cannot state their constraints. To those who agreed, I am grateful for their support and cooperation as in the event of the Trojan Horse Controversy, I almost felt it was impossible to convince any Muslim headteacher at that time to participate. For this reason, I communicated persistently with the five headteachers throughout the period of the research and constantly assured them of the value of such research.

In Pakistan, I had worked as a secondary school teacher in the private sector for more than a decade. It was my first experience of working with state schools; and a really valuable one. In the initial ice-breaking meetings I had with the headteachers, I found myself convincing them of my personal religious inclination as they could not apprehend why a *Muslim* would want to inquire from other Muslims how they understood and practised their religion in a professional role. Thus, my preconceptions about conducting the research smoothly in my home city were proven wrong. It was only when I took on the garb of a researcher, I realised that asking questions about religion in Pakistan is not easy as I felt that my own religiosity was being judged by those I interviewed.

7.2. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

This thesis has provided insight into the understanding of Muslim headteachers of their religion in a professional role. To emphasise the need to locate the headteachers' experiences in their respective contexts, the responses of the ten selected headteachers were compared and contrasted for various aspects identified in the five subsidiary questions (see page 65). In the paragraphs that follow, I will briefly summarise the findings for the two sets of headteachers separately.

7.2.1. Muslim headteachers in England

Religion for the Muslim headteachers in England, as shown by the findings, is at the base of the headteachers' leadership principles, even though they are not very overt about expressing their religion. The language/discourse of the principles used by the English headteachers was mostly secular and reflected their consciousness of the need to conform to professional expectations as

well as to the multi-religious and multi-cultural environment in their schools. The extent to which the English headteachers attributed the sources of guidance to their own religion varied for each headteacher depending on a multitude of factors in the external institutional and national environment. These factors affected the way the English headteachers perceived religion in a leadership role. While the significance of some of these factors was already signalled in existing literature and explored in the headteachers' interviews, there were others which emerged from the responses of the headteachers. One such significant event, the Trojan Horse Controversy (THC), occurred at the time this project started and was repeatedly mentioned by the English headteachers in their interviews.

Owing to the impact this event had on the way the headteachers in England expressed their religion, I will explain its implications in detail in a later section. Finally, the experiences of the teachers and pupils in the selected schools demonstrate that even though the English headteachers did not explicitly talk about the influence of their religiosity on their leadership practices, they were open about expressing their religious identity. Similar to the headteachers, teachers and pupils also narrated various instances where the English headteachers' identity proved beneficial for dealing with particular situations.

7.2.2. Muslim headteachers in Pakistan

The Muslim headteachers in Pakistan view religion as the primary source of guidance for all their actions, personal as well as professional. The extent to which these headteachers emphasised the role of Islam in their narratives, made it difficult to understand how their religious conviction, not just their identity, actually influenced their leadership actions. Although the language/discourse of the leadership principles used by the Pakistani headteachers was quite

similar to their counterparts in England, they instantly related their leadership principles to Islam. All headteachers in Pakistan stressed the religious foundation of their principles and guidance, however, the statutory guidance was regarded as strictly prescriptive. Remaining confined within the boundaries of government rules and regulations for leading state schools, the Pakistani headteachers feel that they have very little room to manoeuvre.

The findings indicate that a number of contextual factors influence the way the headteachers in Pakistan perceive religion in their leadership role. While only those factors were considered which were particularly related to the headteachers' own religion and to the place of religion in the public sphere of Pakistan, there were additional factors which emerged from the headteachers' narratives. For example, the emphasis on Islam in the National Curriculum was highlighted by some teachers and suggested various implications it had on the way the headteachers used their religion in a professional role. Finally, the teachers and students in the selected schools, perceive the religion of the headteachers as aligned with the state religion, the National Curriculum and the religion of the majority. Although in some instances, teachers and students highlighted various actions which only a *Muslim* headteacher could take, most of the time they did not consider the headteachers' religion as extraordinary.

7.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research argues that the religion of Muslim headteachers can be instrumental in their leadership roles depending on (a) the individual contexts of their schools and (b) the place of religion in the national context. Having provided these arguments, I now intend to look more broadly at the experience of being a Muslim headteacher in two countries as culturally and

religiously diverse as England and Pakistan. In the paragraphs that follow, I will state the implications for each country separately.

7.3.1. England

The perception of the Muslim headteachers in England of the impact of their religion in their professional role way suggested that Islam was more of an identity signifier for them rather than a spirituality from which they derived their principles and guidance for leading a state school. This finding, along with other related subsidiary findings, evidenced through the English headteachers' narratives, has a number of possible implications. First, the way that headteachers expressed their religion clearly tied their religious identity to that of the majority pupils in their schools. Although this does not demonstrate the necessity of having a Muslim headteacher for schools with majority Muslim children, it does highlight the value of headteachers and pupils sharing a similar religious background. It was clear from their narratives, for example, that headteachers found their religious identity to be helpful in dealing with certain situations which involved Asian Muslim pupils and parents, in particular. Thus, the close identification between Muslim headteachers and Muslim pupils and the empirical evidence it provided of the benefits of this association should contribute to the wider debate in the literature of increasing diversity in leadership (Morgan, 2016).

Second, the "common-to-all-religions" discourse used by the Muslim headteachers in England reflects a close similarity between Islamic leadership principles and those of other religions. Therefore, if the leadership principles expressed by the English headteachers are synonymous with the values of both school and community, it can be inferred that a Muslim headteacher is valuable even in schools where there are few or no Muslim pupils. However, in the wake of the

recent Trojan Horse Controversy, the use of such discourse appeared to be a *reactive* rather than a *proactive* move by the selected Muslim headteachers. The ongoing interrogations of Muslim professionals in Muslim majority schools and the resulting hostility towards Muslims, at the time the interviews were conducted, resulted in the headteachers feeling vulnerable in their leadership roles.

The English headteachers' narratives showed an interesting tension between their inhibitions in talking explicitly about Islam and the many ways in which they felt able to be explicit about the value of their religious identity, thereby demonstrating that being a *Muslim* headteacher is not, in fact, problematic. Therefore, while the media discourse is talking about the dangers of having too much Islamic influence in schools, the findings of this study show the value of having a reasonable and rational Islamic influence within schools to counter subverted versions of Islam.

Finally, the discourse of religion used by the MHIE contributes significantly to the widely debated issue of handling religious beliefs in education in England. While the premise of this debate is the increasing religious diversity in the country and the different views that people have about religion, most of the existing literature centres around Christianity and its place in the public sphere. Considering the fact that Muslims constitute the largest minority religious community (Davie, 2015), the findings of this study offer a new dimension to this debate by providing insight into how Muslim professionals perceive their religion in a leadership position. The manifestation of the Muslim headteachers' religion in a professional role offers empirical evidence which can contribute to the existing debate on doing God in education (Cooling, 2010) from an Islamic perspective.

7.3.2. Pakistan

The "Islam-dominant" discourse used by Muslim headteachers in Pakistan signifies the place and value of religion in the everyday lives of Muslims living in the country. The narratives of the Pakistani headteachers have shown that Islam is the professed guiding force, a source of spiritual strength, for all their actions. These headteachers feel more able to express their religious inclination/conviction as opposed to the English headteachers who felt more comfortable in identifying themselves as Muslims rather than expressing Islam as a guiding force for their actions. At a personal level, the Pakistani headteachers' emphasis on Islam as the foundation for their leadership principles and actions does not seem problematic since their expression of religion aligns with the [religious] beliefs of the majority staff and students in their schools *and* beyond that, it mirrors the state ideology. However, there is some evidence in the headteachers' narratives which points towards the issues resulting from the hegemonic discourse of Islam in the [state] education system of the country. One example of such an issue is the Islamic content of the National Curriculum.

The common rhetoric that Pakistan was founded on the basis of Islam resounds in almost every sector in the country. The Islamisation of education, in particular, which started in the Zia-ul-Haq era is clearly reflected in the Islamic content of the National Curriculum and was reinforced by some teachers in the focus groups in relation to minority religious students (Christians in this case) in the schools. Although the study of the National Curriculum is out of the scope of this research, it became relevant when some of the headteachers expressed their views about the handling of religious minorities in a state school. While the findings of this research do not provide sufficient evidence to establish a relationship between the headteachers' religiosity and their opinions about religious minorities, they can feed into the wider public debate about

education and religious discrimination in Pakistan (Hussain, Salim and Arif, 2011; Hussain and Safiq, 2016).

The headteachers' acknowledgement of non-Muslims as equal and worthy of respect, came from their personal beliefs grounded in the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). However, there were times when *some* headteachers thought of Christians as the 'others' and considered themselves incapable of dealing with their religious needs. Thus, the treatment of minorities, as evidenced in the headteachers' narratives, is an issue which is recognised but not being dealt with. It is, therefore, a paradox that headteachers are aware of the expectations from their religion in terms of treating religious minorities, but do not feel comfortable in fulfilling those expectations. One way of dealing with this paradox is to think of ways in which headteachers working in state schools can be equipped with the knowledge and skills to deal with religious minorities so that they can address an issue which has far-reaching implications for the society at large.

7.4. BRINGING IT TOGETHER – 'RELIGION IN EDUCATION' IN ENGLAND AND PAKISTAN

This research has provided an overview of how Muslim headteachers perceive and exercise their religion in a professional role. The idea of conducting a cross-national research was drawn from a personal interest to compare Muslims' perception of religion in a leadership position in a Muslim-minority (England) versus a Muslim-majority (Pakistan) country. While the professional actions of the selected headteachers, in both countries, were found to be constrained by the professional expectations framework, the manifestation of religion within that framework varied significantly. This implies that irrespective of the headteachers common religious *and* ethnic background, they had different perceptions about religion in a professional role owing to

differences in the institutional and national contexts. Of these two, the national level is the most significant in contributing to how the Muslim headteachers perceive [or ought to] their religion in a professional role.

Although both England and Pakistan have a declared state religion, it is the historical weakening of the public expression of religion in England which has led to the debates around religion and religious discourse. With a rapid increase in Muslim faith communities in Britain, the findings of this research can feed into these ongoing debates, most of which still revolve around Christianity. Looking at Islam in education and educational leadership, this research has the potential of offering insights into how a minority religion in a Christian-majority country can be considered instrumental in the face of growing apprehensions about religion in general and Islam in particular. The case of Pakistan is completely different. *Thinking* about the religious identity in an *Islamic* country is considered unusual by the headteachers, teachers and students. Nevertheless, Islam continues to be the dominant religion affecting all leadership actions of the Muslim headteachers. While acknowledging the dominance of Islam in the public sphere of Pakistan, and educational leadership in particular, the findings of this research can contribute to wider debates about the role of Islam in education and its possible implications on issues pertaining to religious minority students.

7.5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POSSIBLE FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of this exploratory study have provided deep insight into the working of Muslim headteachers in state schools. By involving teachers and students in the research, the narratives of the headteachers were confirmed, and in some cases, countered. The multiple perspectives about religion in education, obtained in the process of this research, have opened up various

avenues for further research explained below. Although the size of the sample was small, it is the significance of these perspectives that enable me to raise questions which can be answered by further research.

1. What can further research on Islamic discourse in education contribute to current debates on religion in education in England, especially when Muslims as a minority religious group are growing significantly?
2. In the wake of the Trojan Horse Controversy, and continuing controversies about Islam in education, how can similar research studies contribute to reduce the vulnerability felt by Muslim professionals working in public institutions? While the value of having a Muslim headteacher in a Muslim-majority school was clearly evidenced by the findings of this research, it is worth investigating what influence, if any, a Muslim headteacher will have on the running of a school when the majority pupils and members of staff are White British.
3. In Pakistan, some of the teachers in the focus groups identified the concerns of Christian students regarding the Islamic content of the syllabus. Additionally, the headteachers felt incapable of handling their religious needs. Further studies can be conducted to explore the influence of the Islamisation process on the headteachers' attitudes towards religious minorities and the possible impact of the dominant Islamic discourse on the marginalisation of minority religious groups in the country.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ETHICAL APPROVAL FORM

Application for Ethical Approval for Research Degrees (PhD in Education)

Name of student: **Asima Iqbal**

MA By research	EdD	PhD
		✓

Project title:

Muslim headteachers' religion in their professional role: A comparative study in state schools in England and Pakistan

Supervisor: Dr. Julia Ipgrave; Dr. Elisabeth Arweck

Funding Body: (if relevant):

Warwick Institute of Education Doctoral Scholarship (departmental scholarship given by Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit – WRERU)

Please ensure you have read the Guidance for the Ethical Conduct of Research available in the handbook.

Methodology

Please outline the methodology e.g. observation, individual interviews, focus groups, group testing etc.

Owing to the descriptive nature of the study (stated above), the method of inquiry will be qualitative in nature. I will use the following methods for data collection:

Semi-structured interviews (with headteachers and teachers of the selected schools)

Focus groups (with students)

Participants

Please specify all participants in the research including ages of children and young people where appropriate. Also, specify if any participants are vulnerable e.g. children; as a result of learning disability.

The sample for the research will comprise of six schools with Muslim headteachers of Pakistani origin (three schools each from England and Pakistan will be selected). The participants of the research will be:

Headteachers

Teachers

Students

NOTE: In order to complete the following sections about research ethics, I have carefully read the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2011)

Respect for participants' rights and dignity

How will the fundamental rights and dignity of participants be respected, e.g. confidentiality, respect of cultural and religious values?

Prior to conducting the research, I will inform all the participants about the purpose of the research and the potential benefit to them.

A voluntary consent form will be given to the prospective interviewees, which will outline the following:

- Their participation in the research is voluntary
- They have a right to refuse to answer any particular question/s
- They can withdraw from the research at any time they wish, and
- They can also withdraw their data collected from the interview, within two weeks (Bryman, 2008)
- The names of the schools, selected for the research, will be kept anonymous and participants' identity shall not be revealed in any section of the research project.
- The data obtained from the interviews will only be accessed by my supervisors and myself and used for the purpose of this research project alone.

Privacy and confidentiality

How will confidentiality be assured? Please address all aspects of research including protection of data records, thesis, reports/papers that might arise from the study.

The participants' right to privacy will be exercised by providing them with the opportunity of either withdrawing from the study or refrain from answering any questions.

Confidentiality will be guaranteed by giving pseudo names to the selected schools and their participants while analysing the data. When transcribing the interviews and reporting the findings, codes/numbers will be used to identify the participants.

I will inform the participants that the data collected will be used for a PhD research project, and will later be disseminated for academic conferences and journal publications.

The interview records of all participants will be kept safe by locking them in a secure place. Only my supervisor and I will have access to these records.

Consent - *will prior informed consent be obtained?*

- *from participants?* Yes/No *from others?* Yes/No

- *explain how this will be obtained. If prior informed consent is not to be obtained, give reason:*

A voluntary consent form will be given to the participants prior to the interview. They will be asked to agree to the conditions stated in the consent form (listed above) before proceeding with the interview.

- *will participants be explicitly informed of the student's status?*

Yes. I will inform the participants about my status when introducing my research project to them.

Competence

How will you ensure that all methods used are undertaken with the necessary competence?

Prior to conducting this research, I have successfully completed an MPhil degree, which was a detailed qualitative study of five Islamic schools in Lahore, Pakistan. This added to my research experience as I employed all tools of qualitative data analysis in depth.

I have also attended the Advanced Research Method (ARM) course and acquired skills, which further developed my competence in this area.

I continue to read books and journal articles extensively to upgrade my knowledge of the research methods applicable to my research project.

I discuss the choice of research methods with my supervisor for expert advice and modify my approaches accordingly.

Protection of participants

How will participants' safety and well-being be safeguarded?

The research is not intended to cause any stress or harm to the participants. This will be conveyed to them before starting the interviews so that they make themselves as comfortable as possible and in case, they wish to change the location or prefer some other form of privacy, they can inform me.

The headteachers, teachers and students, participating in this research project, will be assured that information obtained from them in the interviews will only be shared between them and myself. That is, the interview data from each participant will neither be shared within the schools, nor across schools.

Child protection

Will a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service formerly CRB) check be needed?

Yes/No (A copy is attached.)

Addressing dilemmas

Even well planned research can produce ethical dilemmas. How will you address any ethical dilemmas that may arise in your research?

Keeping in view my prior experience of conducting a similar research, teachers are hesitant to talk about leadership practices of their headteachers. If such a situation arises, I will try to change the research setting so they feel less intimidated and are at ease to answer the interview questions.

Misuse of research

How will you seek to ensure that the research and the evidence resulting from it are not misused?

The data obtained from the interviews will be kept safe and secure in password-protected files in the computer and shared only with the supervisors. The data processing and storage (in UK schools) will be done according to the Data Protection Act, UK.

The findings of the research project will be reported as fairly and accurately as possible

The evidence resulting from the research will be used only for the PhD project and later for academic conferences/journals.

Support for research participants

What action is proposed if sensitive issues are raised or a participant becomes upset?

In the event of a participant becoming upset at any stage of the research, they are allowed to withdraw altogether or refuse to answer anything that they consider sensitive.

Since questions pertaining to religious views/beliefs could be sensitive, therefore I will carefully plan and prepare an interview guide, have it checked by my supervisors, and share with the participants prior to conducting the interviews.

Integrity

How will you ensure that your research and its reporting are honest, fair and respectful to others?

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the research, triangulation will be done by taking multiple perspectives on the phenomenon, under study.

The participants will be informed about the aims of the research project right at the start.

The methods of data collection will be clearly communicated to the participants, and care will be taken to respect their personal preferences in terms of venue and timings.

The interview transcriptions will be sent back to the respondents for their review and any suggested additions/deletions will be incorporated.

I will be interpreting the data and analysing the themes emerging from the data, under the guidance of my supervisors.

At the time of completion, the findings of the research project will be shared with the participants, if requested.

What agreement has been made for the attribution of authorship by yourself and your supervisor(s) of any reports or publications?

The attribution of authorship for any future reports and/or publications will follow departmental guidelines as per the handbook.

Other issues?

Please specify other issues not discussed above, if any, and how you will address them.

NA

[redacted]

Signed

Research student

[redacted]

Supervisor

Date

25/3/14

Date

needs signature

Action

Please submit to the Research Office (Louisa Hopkins, room WE132)

Action taken

☑ Approved

☑ Approved with modification or conditions – see below signatures ✓

☐ Action deferred. Please supply additional information or clarification – see below

Name [redacted] Date 25.3.14

Signature [redacted]

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM AND RESEARCH FOCUS

Centre for Education Studies,
The University of Warwick,
Coventry, CV4 8EE.
United Kingdom

Consent to be a Research Participant

Dear _____,

The purpose of this letter is to introduce myself and to ask for your assistance in a research project. I am a PhD student in the Centre for Education Studies at the University of Warwick. The focus of my research is to explore how Muslim headteachers perceive their religion in a professional role, how it influences their leadership actions, the principles underlying these actions and the different sources from which they seek guidance while leading their schools. This investigation will involve Muslim headteachers, teachers, and pupils as participants.

Introduction to the Project: Briefly, the purpose of this research is to study the leadership actions of Muslim headteachers, in England and Pakistan, and explore the extent to which these actions and the underlying principles are influenced by the headteachers' religion. I would also like to gain some understanding of the different contextual factors that affect the leadership actions of Muslim

headteachers. This research is designed as an exploratory study to understand the influence of religion on the Muslim headteachers' leadership practices. It is not an evaluative study of the headteachers' personal religious beliefs.

Procedures: The data collection methods for this research project will comprise face-to-face interviews with the headteachers and focus groups with teachers and pupils. The face-to-face interviews with the headteachers will take place in two phases and each interview will last for about 40-45 minutes. Interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed, and then returned for correcting, deleting and editing. All data will be coded, so your name will not be used. Pseudonyms will be used in all reporting to maintain your anonymity.

The focus groups (consisting of 5-6 teachers and 5-6 pupils) will be conducted with the teachers and pupils independently. They will be asked to talk about their experiences of the headteachers' leadership actions and how they perceive the religion of their respective headteachers in a leadership role. Each focus group session (with teachers and pupils) will last for about 40-50 minutes.

Benefits: As a Muslim headteacher, your comments, thoughts and insights may help other Muslim headteachers in your country as well as in other countries by providing them examples of leadership actions as influenced by their religion. Being a cross-cultural research, the findings will significantly contribute to the existing literature on religion in education and educational leadership in two socially and culturally diverse countries like England and Pakistan.

Confidentiality: Please note that as a participant you will be able to withdraw from this research without any consequences at any time. Should withdrawal from this research be necessary, please

contact the researcher by phone or email as per details below. Any information you give as part of this research will be stored in a secure place and held in accordance with the University of Warwick requirements. As such it will remain strictly confidential, and be used only for the purpose of this thesis and subsequent academic publications. As far as possible, the researcher will take all reasonable steps to safeguard the anonymity of all headteachers, teachers, pupils and their schools throughout the research process. This research project has also gone through the university's ethical approval procedure.

Finally, should you have any further questions regarding this project, you can contact the researcher via details given below.

Sincerely

Asima Iqbal

Doctoral Research Student
Centre for Education Studies
University of Warwick, Coventry,
UK.
Cell: 0745 1965400
email: a.b.iqbal@warwick.ac.uk

Supervisors:

Dr. Julia Ipgrave
Senior Research Fellow, WRERU
Centre for Education Studies
University of Warwick
Coventry, CV4 8EE
Email: j.ipgrave@warwick.ac.uk

Dr. Elisabeth Arweck
Senior Research Fellow, WRERU
Centre for Education Studies
University of Warwick
Coventry, CV4 8EE
Email: elisabeth.arweck@warwick.ac.uk

Please sign if you are willing to participate in this research project.

Signature _____

Printed Name _____

Date _____

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

Centre for Education Studies,
The University of Warwick,
Coventry, CV4 8EE.
United Kingdom

Consent to be a Research Participant

Dear _____,

The purpose of this letter is to introduce myself and to ask for your permission to participate in a research which aims to find out about how you, as staff, (a) feel about your school and (b) what you think about the leadership in your school.

Leadership is exercised in many different roles and it is interesting to see what leaders look like and what exactly do they do. In this research project, I am interested in studying school leadership from multiple perspectives as it is important to hear as many voices as possible to get a full picture of this important aspect of school life.

This voluntary consent form seeks your permission to be part of a focus group where 5-6 teachers will get together and participate in a group discussion to share their experiences and stories about their school. Your participation in this research is voluntary and you can withdraw

from the research at any time you wish. You have a right to refuse to answer any particular question/s and you can withdraw your data collected in the interview within two weeks from the interview date.

The name of your school will be kept anonymous and your identity shall not be revealed in any section of the research project. I will be using pseudo-names and/or codes/numbers to identify your voices during the analysis stage.

The data obtained from this focus group will be kept confidential and will be accessed by my supervisors and myself, and used for the purpose of this research project ALONE.

By agreeing to participate in this focus group, are you willing to have your voice recorded in an audio-recorder?

Yes _____

No _____

Finally, should you have any further questions regarding this project, you can contact the researcher via details given below.

Sincerely

Asima Iqbal

Doctoral Research Student
Centre for Education Studies
University of Warwick, Coventry,
UK.
Cell: 0745 1965400
email: a.b.iqbal@warwick.ac.uk

Supervisors:

Dr. Julia Ipgrave
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Centre for Education Studies
University of Warwick
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Email: j.ipgrave@warwick.ac.uk

Dr. Elisabeth Arweck
Senior Research Fellow, WRERU
Centre for Education Studies
University of Warwick
Coventry, CV4 8EE
Email: elisabeth.arweck@warwick.ac.uk

Please sign if you are willing to participate in this research project.

Signature _____

Printed Name _____

Date _____

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS

Centre for Education Studies,
The University of Warwick,
Coventry, CV4 8EE.
United Kingdom

Consent to be a Research Participant

Dear _____,

The purpose of this letter is to introduce myself and to ask for your permission to participate in a research which aims to find out about how you, as students, (a) feel about your school and (b) what you think about the leadership in your school.

Leadership is exercised in many different roles and it is interesting to see what leaders look like and what exactly do they do. In this research project, I am interested in studying school leadership from multiple perspectives as it is important to hear as many voices as possible to get a full picture of this important aspect of school life.

This voluntary consent form seeks your permission to be part of a focus group where 5-6 students will get together and participate in a group discussion to share their experiences and stories about their school. Your participation in this research is voluntary and you can withdraw

from the research at any time you wish. You have a right to refuse to answer any particular question/s and you can withdraw your data collected in the interview within two weeks from the interview date.

The name of your school will be kept anonymous and your identity shall not be revealed in any section of the research project. I will be using pseudo-names and/or codes/numbers to identify your voices during the analysis stage.

The data obtained from this focus group will be kept confidential and will be accessed by my supervisors and myself, and used for the purpose of this research project ALONE.

By agreeing to participate in this focus group, are you willing to have your voice recorded in an audio-recorder?

Yes _____

No _____

Finally, should you have any further questions regarding this project, you can contact the researcher via details given below.

Sincerely

Asima Iqbal

Doctoral Research Student
Centre for Education Studies
University of Warwick, Coventry,
UK.
Cell: 0745 1965400
email: a.b.iqbal@warwick.ac.uk

Supervisors:

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Email: j.ipgrave@warwick.ac.uk

Dr. Elisabeth Arweck
Senior Research Fellow, WRERU
Centre for Education Studies
University of Warwick
Coventry, CV4 8EE
Email: elisabeth.arweck@warwick.ac.uk

Please sign if you are willing to participate in this research project.

Signature _____

Printed Name _____

Date _____

APPENDIX E

FIRST PHASE INTERVIEW GUIDE (HEADTEACHERS)

	Questions
Guidance	**1.** Since I am interested in knowing more about your leadership, please tell me about yourself as a headteacher? <u>Probing questions:</u> ▪ relationship with leadership team members, staff (teaching and non-teaching) and pupils ▪ relationship with governors ▪ relationship with community and parents ▪ your personal philosophy (beliefs and values) ▪ strengths as a leader (what are you proud of?) **2.** While leading your school, do you take guidance from any particular source? <u>Probing questions:</u> ▪ various quality framework elements or ▪ example and advice from other headteachers or ▪ teachings of Islam and their application in a professional role? **3.** Where do you as a headteacher, turn for inspiration? **4.** What motivates you most as a headteacher? **5.** What de-motivates you most as a headteacher? <u>Probing question:</u> Is there anything positive about the controls applied by the state? (in case they talk about state control and state rules and regulations as demotivating factors) **6.** … is mentioned in the vision/mission statement of this school. Can you tell me a bit more about it? *<u>(for UK schools)</u>*

	Probing question: Do you think your own vision is different from the one set by the state? Can you elaborate this any further? **7.** How does your school reflect your vision? Questions 6 and 7 version for Pak schools 6.Can you please describe the vision for this school? Probing question: Do you think your own vision is different from the one set by the state? Can you elaborate this any further? 7.How does your school reflect your vision?
Principles	**8.** How does decision-making happen in your school? **9.** What principles do you use in making key decisions in your school? Can you give an example?
Contextual factors (school culture, ethnicity and religiosity of pupils, social background of pupils and national religion)	**10.** Can you tell me something about the daily acts of worship/collective worship (assemblies) that take place in your school? Probing questions: ▪ What happens in such acts of collective worship? ▪ What place do they have in the ethos of the school? ▪ As a headteacher, what influence do you have over them? To what extent do you think you use your personal principles to influence the nature/content of these acts of collective worship? How? *(for UK schools)* Do you use any personal principles to influence the nature/content of these assemblies? *(for Pak schools)* **11.** Regarding the display on the walls in your school, can you tell: the significance of these displays, if you have any role in deciding the content the impact you believe the displays have on staff and pupils in your school? **12.** What different ethnic and religious groups do pupils in your school belong to? **a)** How similar to your own religious background is the religious background of your pupils? What impact does this have on your leadership principles?

	b) In what ways do you think your own religious background impacts the way you respond to the religion of your pupils? **c)** (As a headteacher of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious school), How do you model to your staff the need to understand the culture and background realities of pupils belonging to different ethnicities as well as religious groups? **d)** What provisions do you make for pupils of minority faiths so that they feel part of the school culture? **13.** In addition to ethnicity and religiosity, do you think the social background of pupils affects your leadership actions? Please explain. **14.** How would you describe the culture of your school? <u>Probing questions</u> ▪ relationship with staff, pupils, other stakeholders; norms and values you have to follow, etc. ▪ 'Symbols', 'rituals' and 'ceremonies', for example routine tasks such as classroom visits, taking school rounds, staff meetings, daily acts of worship, etc. **15.** Do you think that your school's culture is known and understood by all in your school? **16.** What, in your opinion, is the place given to religion, in public institutions in your country?
	17. As a headteacher, what difference do you want to make in the life of people in your care (staff, pupils and the community)? ***Probe:*** How would you like your staff and pupils to see you as a headteacher?

APPENDIX F

SECOND PHASE INTERVIEW GUIDE (FOR MUSLIM HEADTEACHERS IN ENGLAND)

1. Coming from a particular faith background, could you say a bit more (in your last interview, you mentioned a little bit) about how your personal principles influence your leadership style?
2. Can you think of an example where your own principles influenced your work as a headteacher? Please explain.

[From where do you think you derive your leadership principles? Any particular source? (depending on the response, a later probe can be used such as 'are there any religious or spiritual underpinnings? Or if someone in the UK says spiritual instead of religious or vice versa, then something like 'I'm interested to hear more about that…')]

3. As a Muslim headteacher, have you ever faced the challenge of compromising your own principles to tackle a situation? Please explain.
4. Considering …. *(repeating the situation described by the headteacher in Q.3.)*, has this made you rethink the relationship between your religion and your professional role?
5. As a Muslim child growing up in England, what different factors influenced:

- your identity as a Muslim and
- the way you expressed it?

6. Did your experience as a child in this school (or in your school) motivate you to become a headteacher?
7. To what extent has your identity as a Muslim had an impact on your professional role? Please explain. (for both types of headteachers: who were pupils in the same school or who were pupils in some other school in the same area)
8. The religious profile in England is very different as compared to Pakistan. Does this influence your personal religiosity in any way? Please explain.
9. What are the particular challenges about being a Muslim leading a school like this in a country where Muslims are in the minority?
10. *(Optional)* Has the Trojan Horse Affair undermined your leadership in the school?

APPENDIX G

SECOND PHASE INTERVIEW GUIDE (FOR MUSLIM HEADTEACHERS IN PAKISTAN)

1. Coming from a particular faith background, could you say a bit more (in your last interview, you mentioned a little bit) about how your personal principles influence your leadership style?

[From where do you think you derive your leadership principles? Any particular source? (depending on the response, a later probe can be used such as 'are there any religious or spiritual underpinnings? Or if someone in the UK says spiritual instead of religious or vice versa, then something like 'I'm interested to hear more about that…']

2. To what extent is your personal religiosity significant in leading the school? (especially when you think that religion in public institutions in this country is confined only to the subject of Islamic Studies?) Please explain?

a) Tell me something about how you use your personal religiosity in leading the morning assembly in your school?

b) I was interested in the displays around your school. Can you tell me a bit more about your motivation for choosing the content in these displays?

c) Does the subject of Ethics, offered to the Christian students as an alternative to Islamic Studies, teach ethics that are different or are they universal?

3. In your opinion, does religion actually support you in making practical decisions as a headteacher? Can you explain with some examples?

4. Can you think of an example where your own principles influenced your work as a headteacher? Please explain.

5. As a Muslim headteacher, have you ever faced the challenge of compromising your own principles to tackle a situation? Please explain.

6. Considering …. *(repeating the situation described by the headteacher in Q.5.)*, has this made you rethink the relationship between your religion and your professional role?

7. The religious profile in Pakistan is very different as compared to England. Does this influence your personal religiosity in any way? Please explain?

APPENDIX H

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

Discussion starter question

1. As member of the teaching staff, how would you define your role?

Discussion probes

- To what extent do you think you have a leadership role to perform?
- What kind of leadership role is this?
- What are the different principles that underpin the leadership role you exercise?
- Do you think there are any particular principles, established by the headteacher, that you use in your role?
- To what extent do you think your own principles relate to the principles held by the headteacher?

Key questions

2. Do you know about the religion/faith of your headteacher?

Discussion probes

- Do you know what it is?
- How do you know?
- Does he ever talk about it?
- Does the fact that the headteacher is a Muslim make any difference to your school, or how he runs the school, or to the things he thinks are important in the school?

3. How does the headteacher's own religion impact the way he deals with the diversity in this school?

Additional questions

4. Tell me something about your school motto (or mission statement or vision). What, in your opinion, are the values that underpin this motto? (or mission statement or vision). Please explain.

Discussion probes

- Who, in your opinion, decides the school motto?
- To what extent, do you think, the school motto reflects the headteacher's own principles?

(An alternative to **Question 4** for teachers in **Pakistan**)

Tell me something about the visual displays in your school? What, in your opinion, are the values that underpin these visual displays. Please explain.

Discussion probes

- Who, in your opinion, decides the content of the visual displays?
- To what extent, do you think, the visual displays reflect the headteacher's own principles?

5. How would you describe the role of the headteacher within the life of the school?

6. Think about a particular incident/event where you feel that the values of the school were **(a)** strongly expressed and/or **(b)** challenged. What was done to respond to such an incident? (Who responded? And how?)

APPENDIX I

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

Discussion starter question

1. Think about TWO things that you like best about your school and note them down on the sticky note in front of you.

Transition questions

In case some pupils mention any particular member/s of staff in Q.1. but NOT the headteacher, the next questions will be:

2. Tell me something more about your experience? Did anyone have an experience similar to or different than _____? (*second part of this question is aimed to encourage participation from all group members*)

3. Looking at your responses, one thing that I am surprised no one has mentioned is the headteacher. Does h/she make a difference to the school or not? (*everyone will be encouraged to express their opinions here*)

Key question

4. Do you know about the religion/faith of your headteacher?

Discussion probes

- Do you know what it is?
- How do you know?
- Does he ever talk about it?
- Does the fact that the headteacher is a Muslim make any difference to your school, or how he runs the school, or to the things he thinks are important in the school? (Are there any special provisions made by the headteacher for pupils of different faiths? If yes, does the headteacher's own religion influence him to make such provisions?)
- How does the headteacher's own religion impact the way he deals with the diversity in this school?

Additional questions

5. Tell me something about your school motto. Do you know what it is? (*in case they say something about it, the next questions will be)*

- Which person or people in your school make sure _____?

- Do you think the headteacher has a role in making sure that _____? If yes, please explain.

(An alternative to **Question 5** for students in Pakistan)

Tell me something about the displays in your school? Do you know what these displays contain? (*in case they say something about it, the next questions will be)*

- In your opinion, what is the significance of these displays?
- Are you, as students, impacted by the content of these displays? How?
- Which person or people in your school decide the content of these displays?
- Which person or people in your school make sure that you understand what is displayed?
- Do you think the headteacher has a role in making sure that you understand the content of these displays? If yes, please explain.

6. Can you think of an incident (that occurred in the school playground or anywhere else) where some children got into a fight/argument? Can you relate the incident?

Discussion probes

- How was the argument resolved?
- Who was the key person who resolved the argument and how?
- Do you think there are any standard rules in your school to resolve such arguments?
- If, in case, the argument is about a religious matter, do you think it will be resolved any differently?
- What, do you think, the headteacher will do in such a particular case? (where the argument is over a religious matter?)
- Do you think the headteacher's own religion/faith influences, or will influence, the way she resolves such issues?

APPENDIX J

INITIAL CODING

Coding of Muslim headteachers' first-phase interviews/Analytic categories 1

Religious (R)
Secular (S)
Moral (M)

HTM

Leadership actions *(the style of leadership the headteachers manifest in the ethos, relations and practices of their schools)*	**Principles** *(underlying moral rules or beliefs that help the headteachers to know what is right and wrong and which influence their actions)*	**Guidelines** *(advice or instructions from a variety of sources like secular or religious)*
▪ spending money on learning environment	▪ Doing the best for every child since every child deserves the best **(M)** ▪ 'would I be happy if my child was in that class?' **(M)**	
▪ constantly roaming around the school to monitor staff and pupils		▪ to be constantly everywhere, as part of her job (S)
▪ encouraging parents to be less protective	▪ teaching children life skills in order to make them street wise (S)	
▪ Challenging stereotypical views of parents	▪ to accommodate certain things (like PE, music lessons, going to trips, etc.) in order to feel part of the society they are living in. (S)	▪ Challenging the parents by saying that a lot of their stereotypical views are not always backed up by the Holy Qurán. (R) ▪ To be mindful of the evaluation authorities (Ofsted) who are observant of the diverse communities in the school and how they get along with each other (S)
▪ Being open and transparent with staff and being visible at all times	▪ To prevent gossip by addressing it straight away (S)	
▪ Hiring a mix of people both as part of staff and SLT in order to meet the challenge of parents demanding for more Christian teachers.	▪ Showing equality by celebrating events so that needs of all communities, whether religious or cultural, are addressed. (S;M)	
▪ Involving leadership team in every task even if they don't like that area.		▪ Need to develop a variety of skills if they want to become a HT. (S)
▪ Educating and informing people about matters of religion (Islam)	▪ Better understanding due to similar background (in the case of Islam), but true for any other religion. (M)	
▪ Mentoring and developing people who	▪ To help people deal with institutionalized racism. (S)	

APPENDIX K

PSEUDONYMS FOR MUSLIM HEADTEACHERS IN ENGLAND AND PAKISTAN

Muslim Headteachers in England (MHIE)	Muslim Headteachers in Pakistan (MHIP)
Ahmad	Malik
Khalid	Waseem
Sajjad	Ehsan
Laiba	Rabia
Mona	Aziza

APPENDIX L

TOTAL NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS WITH HEADTEACHERS, TEACHERS AND PUPILS

	Pakistan	England
Headteachers	**10** (2 interviews from each headteacher)	**10** (2 interviews from each headteacher)
Teachers	**10** (2 focus groups from each school)	**8** (In 2 schools, I could conduct only 1 focus group with the teachers)
Pupils	**10** (2 focus groups from each school)	**10** (2 focus groups from each school)

APPENDIX M

PROFILES OF THE MHIE AND THEIR SCHOOLS

Headteachers' profile					School profile	
	Pseudonym	**Gender**	**Age**	**Years as headteacher of present school**	**School level**	**Geographical location**
1	Ahmad	Male	46-50	8	Secondary school	West Midlands
2	Khalid	Male	41-45	9	All-through school (age 4-19)	West Midlands
3	Sajjad	Male	41-45	5	Primary school	West Midlands
4	Laiba	Female	51-55	5	Primary school	North-East London
5	Mona	Female	46-50	4	Primary school	West London

APPENDIX N

ACRONYMS FOR TEACHER AND PUPIL FOCUS GROUPS IN ENGLISH SCHOOLS ALONG WITH THEIR COMPOSITION

Headteachers	Teacher focus groups	Pupil focus groups
Ahmad	Only one focus group conducted. All of them were Newly Qualified Teachers who were class teachers.	PEA1; PEA2 PEA1 – Year 8 and 9 pupils PEA2 – Year 10 and 11 pupils
Khalid	TEK1; TEK2 TEK1 – Class teachers with additional responsibility TEK2 – Class teachers	PEK1; PEK2 PEK1 – Year 8 and 9 pupils PEK2 – Year 10 and 11 pupils
Sajjad	Only one teacher interviewed who was a class teacher with additional responsibility	PES1; PES2 PES1 – Year 5 pupils PES2 – Year 6 pupils
Laiba	TEL1; TEL2 TEL1 – Class teachers with additional responsibility TEL2 – Class teachers	PEL1; PEL2 PEL1 – Year 5 pupils PEL2 – Year 6 pupils
Mona	TEM1; TEM2 TEM1 – Class teachers TEM2 – Class teachers with additional responsibility	PEM1; PEM2 PEM1 – Year 5 pupils PEM2 – Year 6 pupils

APPENDIX O

PROFILES OF THE MHIP AND THEIR SCHOOLS

Headteachers' profile					School profile		
	Pseudonym	**Gender**	**Age**	**Years as headteacher of present school**	**School level**	**Gender division**	**Geographical location**
1	Malik	Male	41-45	10	High school (Grade 6 – Grade 10)	Boys only	Cantt division (South of Lahore)
2	Waseem	Male	41-45	7	High school (Grade 6 – Grade 10)	Boys only	Lahore city division
3	Ehsan	Male	41-45	10	High school (Grade 6 – Grade 10)	Boys only	Lahore city division
4	Rabia	Female	36-40	6	High school Nursery – Grade 10)	Girls only	Lahore city division
5	Aziza	Female	56-60	13	Middle school (Nursery till Grade 8)	Girls only	Cantt division

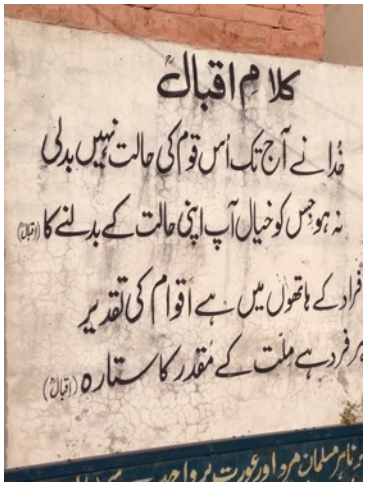
APPENDIX P

ACRONYMS FOR TEACHER AND PUPIL FOCUS GROUPS IN PAKISTANI SCHOOLS ALONG WITH THEIR COMPOSITION

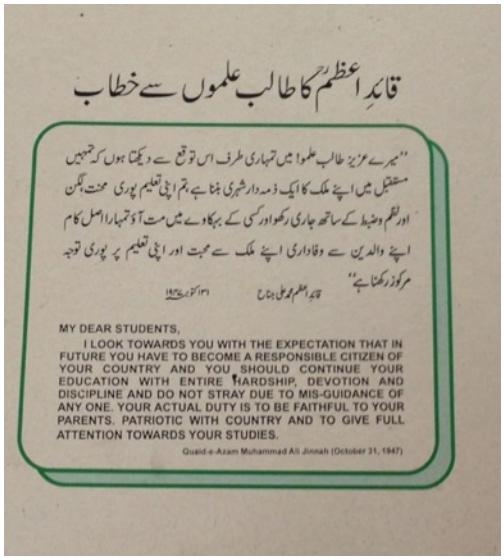
Headteachers	Teacher focus groups	Student focus groups
Malik	TPM1; TPM2 TPM1 – Class teachers with additional responsibility TPM2 – Class teachers	SPM1; SPM2 SPM1 – Grade 8 and 9 students SPM2 – Grade 9 and 10 students
Waseem	TPW1; TPW2 TPW1 – Class teachers with additional responsibility TPW2 – Class teachers	SPW1; SPW2 SPW1 – Grade 7 and 8 students SPW2 – Grade 9 and 10 students
Ehsan	TPE1; TPE2 TPE1 – Class teachers TPE2 – Class teachers with additional responsibility	SPE1; SPE2 SPE1 – Grade 7 and 8 students SPE2 – Grade 9 and 10 students
Rabia	TPR1; TPR2 TPR1 – Class teachers with additional responsibility TPR2 – Class teachers	SPR1; SPR2 SPR1 – Grade 5 students SPR2 – Grade 6 students
Aziza	TPA1; TPA2 TPA1 – Class teachers TPA2 – Class teachers with additional responsibility	SPA1; SPA2 SPA1 – Grade 5 students SPA2 – Grade 6 students

APPENDIX Q

EXAMPLES OF VISUAL DISPLAYS IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IN PAKISTAN

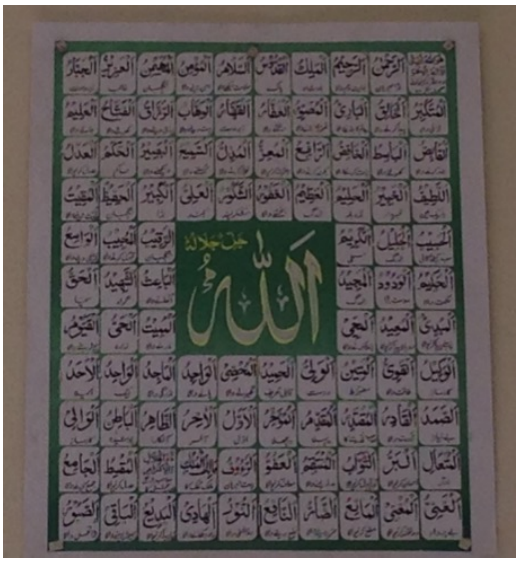


Poetry of Allama Iqbal



An excerpt from Quaid-e-Azam's speech

Pakistan's National Anthem



Names of Allah

***Hadith* of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) – 'Seeking knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim (male or female)'**

Sunnah of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in drinking water:

1. **To read '*Bismillah*' before drinking water**
2. **To drink with the right hand**
3. **To sit while drinking**
4. **To look carefully at the water**
5. **To drink in three sips**
6. **To say 'Alhamdulillah' after drinking**